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ABSTRACT

This report focuses on how the Chicago Public School District, schools, and teachers implemented key components of the district's accountability agenda and its effects on teaching. Key findings are as follows: (1) formal sanctions influence school and teacher resource allocation; (2) mismatches between formal sanctions and support result in teacher skepticism; (3) professional discretion facilitates implementation of the district's academy model; (4) professional discretion challenges the district's attempts to expand teachers' roles; and (5) teacher discretion circumscribes district instructional intervention. District initiatives have affected how schools and teachers allocate key resources, including time, curriculum, and students. Schools and teachers have accommodated policies that entail formal sanctions and professional discretion by allocating instructional time and activities to fulfill policy objectives. By contrast, district support associated with formal sanctions appears to have had marginal impact. Teachers maintained discretion over classroom instruction, adapting and circumscribing district attempts to direct instructional change. (Contains 24 references and notes.) (DFR)

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Implementation of an Educational Accountability Agenda:

Integrated Governance in the Chicago Public Schools Enters its Fourth Year

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January 1999

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Implementation of an Educational Accountability Agenda: Integrated Governance in the Chicago Public Schools Enters its Fourth Year

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I. Integrated Governance: Setting An Educational Accountability Agenda

In 1995, the Illinois state legislature enacted the Chicago School Reform Amendatory Act, granting the Chicago Public Schools the capacity to launch an educational accountability agenda aimed at system-wide improvement in teaching and learning. The Act reversed the trend towards the decentralization of school operations and, instead, moved towards integrating authority at the system-wide level. In our 1997 and 1998 reports on Chicago school reform, we identified this new governance framework as Integrated Governance.[1]

The major institutional features of Integrated Governance include:

- The reduction of competing authorities;
- The formation of linkages among the school board, district administration and city hall created through mayoral appointments;
- The creation of the position of Chief Executive Officer (CEO) with system-wide authority to hold organizational actors accountable.

Under integrated governance, the School Reform Board of Trustees took several actions towards strengthening the fiscal and political support for the school system. Using expanded powers over financial operations provided by the 1995 Act, the central administration improved capital funding, balanced the budget, and secured labor stability through a four-year contract with the teachers' union. The second four-year contract, approved in November 1998, takes effect in the summer of 1999. The school board launched the first capital improvement plan in decades to address the deterioration of the schools' physical plant. The administration also improved management efficiency by waging a public battle against waste and corruption, down-sizing the central office and contracting out several operations. In our previous report, we found that these actions garnered the support of the business community and improved public confidence in the school system.[2]

Building on these accomplishments, the district-level leadership moved to focus on the difficult task of improving the system's educational performance. Beginning in 1996, the CEO and School Reform Board of Trustees launched an educational accountability agenda that focused on raising standards and improving student performance.

The district's accountability agenda involves various *types of policy levers* aimed at directing and supporting school improvement. In this report, we identify three key types: *formal sanctions*, *support*, and *professional discretion*. District initiatives, such as probation and reconstitution, that utilize formal sanctions to pressure schools and students to improve performance on standardized tests have received considerable public attention. The district's agenda also includes initiatives that provide schools with support and that foster principal and teacher discretion. Even probation and academic promotion entail district support. Schools on probation receive external partners and probation managers to assist in their improvement

efforts. Students who fail to meet promotion requirements are expected to enroll in remediation programs, such as the Summer Bridge. In short, the district's educational accountability agenda entails a complex mixture of pressure and support, intervention and school-level discretion.

This report examines the implementation of the district's educational accountability agenda and assesses its consequences for teaching. Though the district's agenda entails numerous initiatives aimed at different components of the system, in this report we examine the implementation of the educational agenda at the high school level. The administration has identified improving the performance of district high schools as a defining challenge for the system. In an introduction to the first draft of the district's High School Redesign Plan,[3] CEO Paul Vallas noted the importance of improving high schools to the system as a whole:

> Whether we like it or not, the quality of our high schools will define the quality of our school system. While improvements at some elementary schools are remarkable, these improvements have not impacted our high schools or our finished product — high school graduates. Success in reforming education in Chicago hinges on our ability to solve the problems in our high schools.

The challenge of improving high school performance is clearly enormous. Table 1 indicates the persistence of low performance in high schools. The average percentage of students scoring at national norms in reading in the district's high schools during the past eight years ranges from about 18% to 23%. From 1991 to 1998, at the highest point, on average, less than 24% of students in the district's high schools scored at the national norm on reading. In math, between 17% and 26% of students in the high schools scored at the national norm. In 1996, 38 out of the district's 62 non-specialty high schools, or 61%, were placed on probation. In contrast 71 of the 483 elementary schools, or about 15%, were placed on probation. To date, the district has reconstituted only high schools.

There are some promising signs that Chicago's high schools have begun to improve since 1996 when the Vallas administration launched its high school redesign initiative. Standardized test scores have gone up, as shown in Figures 1 and 2. More importantly, schools placed on reconstitution and probation have begun to close the achievement gap between themselves and non-probationary schools. As Figure 3 shows, the gap in reading between reconstituted and non-probationary schools has declined from an almost 1 to 8 ratio in 1996, to about a 1 to 5 ratio in 1998. In math, the gap came down from about 1:7 to 1:5 in the same two years. Similarly, probation schools have narrowed the gap between the percentage of their students scoring at national norms and that percentage in non-probationary schools. The reading gap was reduced from about 1:4 to 1:3, and the math gap was reduced from less than 1:4 to almost 1:2 since 1996. Though standardized test scores represent crude measures of school performance, the decline in the achievement gap between low-performing and average schools when the overall trend is moving up is clearly positive.

From a policy perspective, improvements in

TABLE 1

Percent of Students at National Norms in District High Schools

Subject	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Reading	23.35	20.24	21.00	17.65	19.49	16.92	20.92	23.10
Math	17.43	18.00	20.84	16.50	21.00	17.97	25.83	25.84

Source: *Test of Achievement and Proficiency Reading and Math*, 1991-1998. Chicago Public Schools, Department of Research, Assessment and Quality Review

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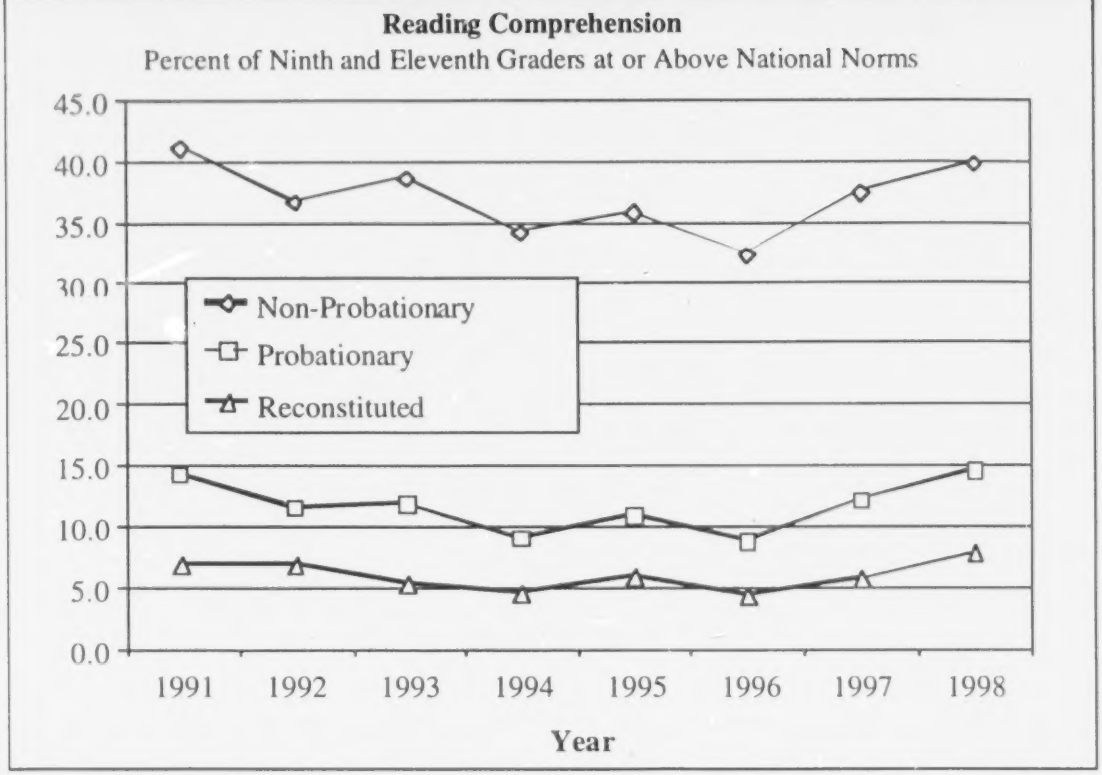
FIGURE 1



high school achievement scores suggest the need for a more systematic examination of the design and impact of district wide reform since 1996. In this study we focus on four policies that are central to Chicago's high school reform efforts: 1) probation and reconstitution; 2) academic promotion; 3) junior academies, and 4) student advisories. To understand how these policies have affected teaching, we conducted a multi-level implementation study that includes data collected at the district, school and classroom levels.

Beginning in 1995, we conducted interviews with district officials and collected district documents. In 1997, we began case studies in four high schools that received varying degrees of district support and intervention. In each school, we conducted interviews with principals, administrators and math and English teachers. We observed ninth and eleventh grade math and English classrooms throughout the year. In addition, we collected such school documents as school improvement plans, budgets and curriculum guides.

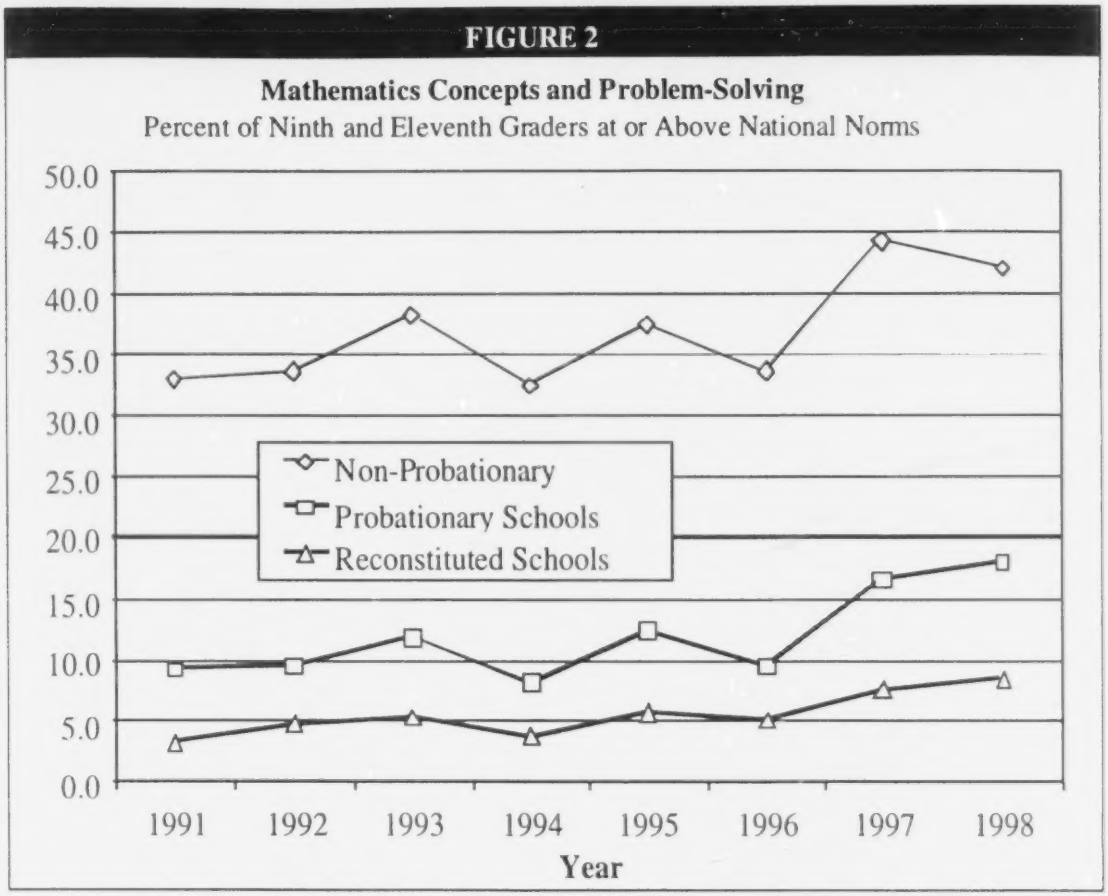
Summary of Findings

This report focuses on how the district, schools and teachers have implemented key components of the district's accountability agenda and the effects of this implementation on teaching. Our key findings follow:

Formal sanctions influence school and teacher resource allocation

Schools and teachers have accommodated to policies that entail formal sanctions by allocating instructional time and activities to fulfill policy objectives. Schools and teachers respond to formal sanctions associated with probation/reconstitution by allocating instructional resources toward test-related activities. Schools placed on probation/reconstitution mandate that teachers implement test practice and test skills development activities.

FIGURE 2



Teachers in these schools allocate from 16% to 60% of instructional time to these mandated activities. Schools under the most severe formal sanctions (i.e., reconstitution) allocate a higher proportion of instructional time to test-related instruction than do other schools.

The district's use of formal sanctions, in combination with its efforts to attract and retain middle class students, appears to create market-like competition amongst schools. Probation/ reconstitution may contribute to a movement of students and faculty away from low-performing schools. Both probation and non-probation schools have responded to this redistribution by implementing specialty programs to attract higher-performing students.

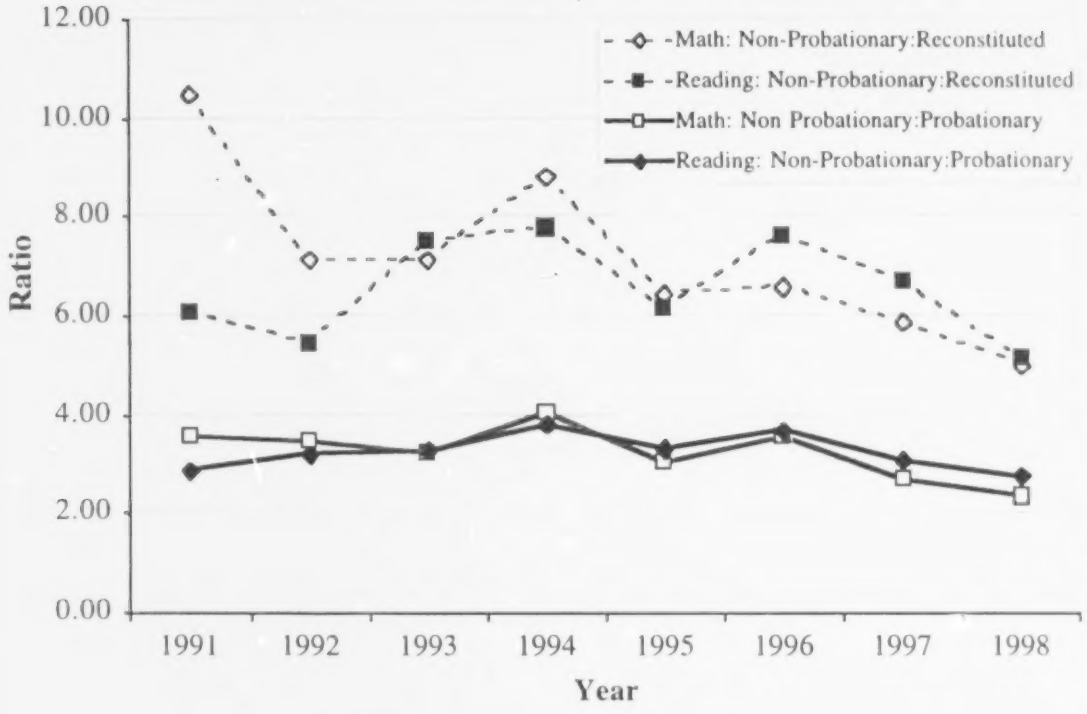
Mismatches between formal sanctions and support result in teacher skepticism

District support associated with formal sanctions has given rise to conflict at the school level while having only marginal impact at the classroom level. District support, such as external partners for schools under probation/reconstitution, has met with mixed results. While principals find external partners helpful, teachers in our case study high schools report that the partners have had little effect on classroom practices. Conflict between teachers and external partners stems, in part, from a mismatch between the central objectives of probation and the responsibilities the district assigns the external partners. While the central criterion for assigning and removing schools from probation are standardized test scores, the district charges external partners with whole-school, long-term improvements.

FIGURE 3

Ratios of Non-Probationary to Probationary and Reconstituted Schools

Percent of Ninth and Eleventh Graders at or Above National Norms



Professional discretion facilitates implementation of the district's academy model

Schools and teachers accommodate to district support associated with policies that emphasize school-level professional discretion. A full 98% of principals surveyed report that they have implemented a Freshmen and/or Junior Academy. Schools have utilized district funds to reorganize teachers' time according to school-selected models. Principals and teachers believe that this reorganization has enabled them to address student problems and has improved student attendance and discipline.

Professional discretion challenges the district's attempts to expand teachers' role

Teacher resistance to the student advisory program is, in part, due to the district's failure to resolve conflict with the Chicago Teachers' Union (CTU) concerning teacher compensation. Teachers showed minimal commitment to the program objectives and reported a limited degree of implementation of the district curriculum for the program.

Teacher discretion circumscribes district instructional intervention

District efforts to intervene in instruction have met with limited success as teachers exercise discretion in the classroom. Teachers in the Summer Bridge Program reported satisfaction with the "structured" curriculum the district provided them; however, teachers maintained considerable discretion over the allocation of instructional activities and time in spite of district emphasis on curricular compliance and increased monitoring.

Teachers exercised substantial discretion in

developing ways to cope with district policies when the latter placed competing demands on curricular and instructional practices. At the classroom level, teachers tended to allocate curriculum and instructional time to address policies that entail formal sanctions on performance outcomes.

In sum, we have found that district initiatives have affected how schools and teachers allocate key resources, including time, curriculum, and students. Schools and teachers have accommodated to policies that entail formal sanctions and professional discretion by allocating instructional time and activities to fulfill policy objectives. In contrast, district support associated with formal sanctions appears to have had marginal impact. Teachers maintained discretion over classroom instruction, adapting and circumscribing district attempts to direct instructional change.

Policy Implications

The district has launched numerous initiatives in its efforts to improve teaching and learning in high schools. Our study indicates that these initiatives have had some impact on how schools and teachers allocate instructional resources. While district efforts have begun to show some progress, the district must confront several key challenges in order to encourage and maintain more sustained, long-term improvement.

District Support for Low-Performing Schools

The district's educational agenda revolves around the use of formal sanctions, support and professional discretion. A key challenge for the district is to strike a balance in its use of these different policy levers in order to support sustained improvement in high schools. This is most crucial in schools that remain on probation and under reconstitution. These schools, on the whole, are making only slight improvements as measured by standardized test scores, even with the support of external partners and probation managers. In addition, the stigma attached to schools under probation and reconstitution may impede efforts at faculty and student recruitment that could provide the necessary resources for long-term school improvement.

It is crucial, then, for the district to reconsider how it supports these low-performing schools. The district needs to assess how key resources, including funds, district and school staff, and university support, can be better utilized. The district has several options.

First, the district can maintain its current support system but reconsider the following: 1) the responsibilities it assigns external partners, and 2) how it evaluates external partners. Regarding the former, the district needs to align the goals it sets for the partners with the central objective of probation/reconstitution, namely the immediate improvement of test scores. With a mission focused on improving reading and math instruction, external partners can provide targeted support to schools. The partners and schools can then work on more long-term processes after this initial targeted phase. Further, the district needs to consider how it assesses the effectiveness of the external partners. External partners advocate different models of school improvement. While this variation may be the appropriate response to variation in school needs, it may also mean that some partners are more or less effective than others. The district needs to develop criteria to assess the quality of the models proposed by external partners and of their performance in the schools. If external partners fail to show results within a reasonable amount of time then the district should reserve the right to "de-certify" the organization as a service provider. In other words, standards and sanctions need to be applied to external partners as well as to schools.

Second, the district can reorganize its support system and rebuild the district's own capacity for providing schools with technical support. In this regard, the technical advisory system developed by the Birmingham Local Education Authority, Chicago's sister district, can serve as a model. The Birmingham Advisory and Support Service (BASS) is staffed with 30 "teacher advisers" who provide teachers with training in classroom practices and with another 35 "link advisers" who as-

sist schools in dealing with issues that affect the entire school organization. BASS staff assesses each school on the improvement it has made in terms of gains in scores on the national exam. The advisers target their assistance to the schools based on these assessments. School staff are integrally involved in establishing the improvement plans.[4]

Third, using local universities to create an innovative teacher recruitment/induction program may support more long term, district-wide instructional improvements. The principal of School B in our case study established connections with teacher education programs and used student teaching as a means to recruit and assess new teachers. The district can work more closely with not only teacher education programs but also arts and science programs within universities to establish these ties in more high schools and to develop an induction period that would greatly enhance the effectiveness of its current recruitment and monitoring programs.

District Support for Instructional Improvement

District efforts to intervene in instruction are greatly circumscribed by the high degree of discretion inherent in the teaching task. Though the district has created several mechanisms by which to evaluate teachers, the current organization of instruction makes evaluation difficult and limits its use as a tool to improve instruction. Given the enduring organizational reality of "loose coupling," the district needs to consider ways of supporting evaluations and professional development that draw upon both the strengths of school faculty and district efforts to establish curricular standards. At issue are the incentives the district can create to support teachers in sustaining, evaluating and developing effective instructional practices with their colleagues. The district needs to consider how its various policies inhibit or facilitate school efforts, in particular, how do district policies constrain teachers' time and curricular decisions, both within and outside the classroom?

Addressing Shifts in Student Enrollment and Faculty Recruitment and Retention

Finally, current district policies appear to contribute to a reduction of student enrollment and faculty retention in probationary schools. These shifts, if allowed to persist, will drain resources needed for improvement away from these schools and may result in overcrowding in other schools, thus undermining improvement efforts across the district. The district needs to examine both how its own policies may contribute to this shift and the extent to which residential choices within the city affect school enrollment patterns. Because of the dominance of market forces in housing patterns, the district needs to assume the responsibility to monitor, and to the extent possible, coordinate supply and demand. Clearly, individual schools are ill-equipped to respond to broader population shifts and schooling demands. In this regard, the district needs to consider how it will deal with schools that are undersubscribed and oversubscribed for a sustained period of time. And, as noted above, how it will support schools in their improvement efforts. The central concern for the district is to ensure that students in both types of schools receive adequate resources and opportunities. Additionally, the district will have to consider eventually how to manage the mismatch between demand and supply.

II. Study Objectives and Research Design

The district's educational agenda reflects a system-wide vision focused on improving high school performance. District policy is implemented, however, within a complex, multi-layered organization. The central administration must rely upon principals, school administrators, teachers, and students to achieve the goals and objectives of its policies. These actors respond to district policies in ways that can support, limit or undermine policy objectives.

Given this organizational reality, several questions arise concerning the implementation of the district's educational accountability agenda. In particular:

- How do principals and teachers respond to district pressure for improved performance?
- How do these responses compare to school and teacher reactions to policies that rely more heavily on professional discretion?
- How do principals and teachers make use of district support?
- How do principals and teachers allocate their resources in response to the various types of district initiatives?
- And, most importantly, what effects do the responses of schools and teachers to district policies have on teachers' classroom practices?

We address these questions by examining the implementation of district initiatives that are central to the administration's efforts to improve teaching and learning in the high schools. These initiatives are:

1) probation and reconstitution;

2) academic promotion;

3) junior and senior academies, and

4) student advisories.

In this report, we look at how each district initiative gets articulated at the school and classroom levels. Rather than relying on surveys that elicit attitudinal responses that can only suggest perceptions of what may be generally the case, our study draws upon interviews and direct observations of principals, teachers and students in particular schools. This approach enables us to assess how district policies affect actual school and classroom practices, with their variations and particularities, in addition to general trends.

The district initiatives we examine entail different combinations of regulatory sanctions, district support and school-level professional discretion. For analytical purposes, we identify how the central administration makes use of three types of leverage to raise school and student performance:

1) Formal sanctions against low performance applied to students and schools;

2) Support for low-performing students and schools, and

3) Professional discretion for school-level control over the design and implementation of improvement programs.

The initiatives differ in terms of the type and degree of district intervention and the level(s) of school organization at which they are aimed. Rather than identifying distinct types of strategies, our categorization allows us to examine how schools and teachers respond to the combination of district mandates, intervention and support, and how these responses affect teaching and learning.

As Table 2 suggests, the initiatives entail varying degrees of pressure, support and professional discretion. Additionally, these can be targeted at more than one level of school organization. Probation/reconstitution is a formal sanction, although it also involves support and limited professional discretion. The district pressures schools to improve test scores through the threat of restaffing. The district also provides support to low-performing schools through external partners and probation managers, allowing principals some discretion in selecting external partners from a board-approved list.

While probation/reconstitution targets low-performing schools, the district's academic promotion policy is aimed at low-performing students. The

TABLE 2

Districtwide Improvement Strategies

Types of Policy Leverage	*Probation/ Reconstitution*	*Academic Promotion*	*Academies*	*Student Advisories*
Pressure	Threat of Restaffing	Grade Retention	Certificate of Initial Mastery, CASE	Required participation
Support	External Partners, Probation Managers	Summer Bridge, Developmental math & reading	Funds for Common Teacher Planning Time, Textbooks, & Science Labs	Teacher Compensation, Curriculum
Professional Discretion	Principal Selection of External Partners	Promotion Waivers; Hiring Teachers in Summer Bridge	Choice of Organizational Model	Choice of Organizational Model

district places pressure on students to improve test scores and course completion through the threat of grade retention. It also provides students who fail to meet these requirements with additional instructional time through the Summer Bridge Program and developmental math and reading courses.

In contrast to the mixture of sanctions and support that mark probation/reconstitution and academic promotion, the academies and student advisories allow for considerable discretion at the school level along with formal sanctions applied to students. The district requires schools to have academies, yet schools determine how they structure the academies. The district also supports schools by providing funds for instructional resources and common teacher planning time. Similarly, the district allows schools flexibility in scheduling and organizing the advisories, and supports schools with an advisory curriculum.

The only formal sanctions currently attached to the academies and advisories apply to students. The district requires students to master a core curriculum in order to move from the junior to senior academy and uses the Chicago Academic Standards Exam (CASE), and the Test of Achievement and Proficiency (TAP) to measure this mastery. The advisories place sanctions upon students by making graduation contingent on student participation. It is unclear, however, how this sanction will be enforced, as currently students do not receive credit for advisories nor is non-attendance punished.

Taken together, these initiatives are central to system-wide efforts to improve teaching and learning in high schools. To examine the implementation of these initiatives and their consequences for teaching, we used several research strategies. Using semi-structured questionnaires, we interviewed the Chief Executive Officer, the Chief Education Officer, the head of the Accountability Office and other central office staff responsible for developing and implementing programs in curriculum and instruction, professional development, and high school restructuring, as well as overseeing the implementation of probation and reconstitution. We also collected documentary materials from the board, including board policies, budget information, minutes of the Chicago School Reform Board of Trustees meetings, publications describing programs and the district's new curriculum standards and frameworks.

To understand the broader policy climate, we collected a database of articles and editorials related to education from the two major Chicago newspapers, the *Chicago Tribune* and the *Chicago Sun-Times*. The compilation of this database began in August 1st, 1995, one month after the mayor took over the school system, and continues to the current date.

To examine the effects of district policies on Chicago's high schools, we designed and administered a survey of principals in non-specialty high

schools. The goal of the survey was to identify how principals have responded to various district policies and the types of district support the principals have received. Forty-one of the district's 62 non-specialty high school principals, or 66%, completed and returned the questionnaire. Principals were asked to identify their schools' approximate enrollment and demographics. They provided information regarding teacher recruitment and retention and answered questions about the implementation of the Chicago Public Schools' high school restructuring efforts, student promotion and enrollment, and program development. If their schools were on probation or being reconstituted, principals were asked to identify the type of services the district provided them. They were also asked to rate the helpfulness of these services to their school improvement efforts.

The survey augments the case studies we have conducted at four Chicago high schools. The schools represent the range of district-initiated interventions. Of these schools, one is reconstituted, one has been on probation for two years, one was removed from probation after one year, and the fourth is under no district intervention. We began collecting data in two of the schools in the 1996-97 school year, and continued in the 1997-98 school year, adding the other two schools that year. At each school, we interviewed the principal, administrators, and English and mathematics teachers. Interviews focused on the social organization of each school, how curriculum is developed and assessed, the involvement of administrators and teachers in district programs and interventions, and faculty responses to the districts' high school restructuring efforts (e.g. curriculum standards, frameworks and assessments, and, when applicable, probation and/or reconstitution).

In each of the schools we conducted classroom observations of regular-level English and math courses at the ninth and eleventh grade levels. Ninth and eleventh grades represent the "high stakes" grades for schools. The district's criteria for probation and reconstitution center on the percent of ninth and eleventh graders who score at national norms on the TAP math and reading tests. The district also targets ninth graders with its promotion policies, described below, and initiated high school restructuring efforts in the ninth grade. If district policies such as probation/reconstitution and the academies have an effect on schools and teachers, we should see them most clearly at these grades. Given the district's emphasis on math and reading scores, we observed math and English classes because they should most clearly reflect school and teacher-level responses to district policies.

We conducted classroom observations during the first and second semesters, observing eight teachers in each school: four math and four English teachers. We observed one regular-level section taught by each teacher three to five times over the course of two weeks during each semester. Observations occurred between October and December during first semester and again from late January to early May during second semester. We conducted observations at two points in the year in order to examine the effects of district policies on the curriculum and teachers' instructional decisions. Our observations during the second semester occurred from one to two months prior to the administration of the state assessment, the Illinois Goals and Achievement Project (IGAP), and the TAP tests. We would expect to see test preparation activities during these observations given the district's emphasis on test scores as reflected in the probation and reconstitution policies. By comparing observations collected during the two semesters, we can examine how the responses schools and teachers make to district policies affect the nature of teachers' curricular and instructional decisions concerning the year-long curriculum as well as the immediate pressures associated with the IGAP and TAP.

We first collected classroom observations during the second semester of 1996-97, in Schools B and D. We collected 1,056 minutes of classroom observations in School B and 1,093 minutes in School D, the two initial case study high schools. During 1997-98, we observed English and math classrooms for one week during the first semester and one week during the second semester in

Schools B and D. In Schools A and C we conducted classroom observations during second semester. In sum, we collected 3,427 minutes of classroom observations in School B, 3,483 minutes in School D, 1,596 minutes in School C and 1,510 minutes in School A in 1997-98. In both years, we also analyzed school documents such as school improvement plans, curriculum guidelines, budgets, and staff development materials.

Table 3 reports basic demographics of the case study high schools and indicates their performance on the TAP. In 1997-98, School A enrolled close to 2,000 students, who were 100% African-American and 80% low-income. School A has never been on probation. In 1998, over 30% of students at School A scored at or above national norms in reading on the TAP. Over 40% of the students scored at or above national norms in math. School A has been in our case study since June 1997.

School B had a student enrollment of over 1,500 in 1997-98, with 100% of its students classified as low-income. School B had a diverse student population. Over 75% of the students were minority and 30% were classified as Limited English Proficient (LEP). School B was on probation for one year. In 1998, 30% of students at School B scored at or above national norms in reading on the TAP, and over 30% of students scored at or above national norms in math. School B has been in our case study since June 1996.

School C had an enrollment of over 2,000 students in 1997-98. Over 75% of the students can be classified as low-income. School C has a racially and ethnically diverse student population. Over 90% of the students are minority and close to 30% of the students are LEP. School C has been on probation for two years. In 1998 over 10% of the students in School C scored at or above national norms in reading on the TAP, while over 25% scored at or above national norms in math. Our research in School C began in January 1998.

School D has an enrollment of over 1,000. Its student body is 100% African-American and 90% low income. In 1998, less than 10% of students at School D scored at or above national norms on the TAP in reading and math. School D was on probation during the 1996-97 school year. In June 1997 it was reconstituted and it remains in reconstitution to this date. School D has been a case study school since June 1996.

While we believe that our study provides valuable insight into how Chicago's accountability agenda affects school and classroom practices, there are some limitations to our findings. First, we examine only four high schools. Although the schools have encountered a wide range of district interventions, the generalizability of our findings are obviously limited. Second, we conducted classroom observations for two weeks of the school year. They do not provide a comprehensive picture of teaching and learning as they unfold over the course of the school year. As we note below, the timing of our observations meant that we did

TABLE 3

Characteristics of Case Study High Schools *

School	Status	Enrollment 1997-98	% Racial and Ethnic Minority 1997-98	% LEP	% Low-income	% of Students at National Norm on TAP, 1997-1998	
						Reading	Math
A	Non-Prob.	≥2,000	100	0	80	35	40
B	Former Prob.	1,500-2,000	75	30	100	30	30
C	Prob.	≥2,000	90	30	80	10	30
D	Reconst.	1,000-1,500	100	0	90	5	10

* To protect the anonymity of the case study schools, percentages have been rounded to the nearest multiple of 5.

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not see how teachers have responded to district policies in total.

To be sure, each mode of data collection captures particular aspects of school policy and practices. Interviews with central office administration provide a broad policy overview, our survey indicates principals' views on districtwide policies, and our classroom data are contextually rich but limited by the time of year we conducted our observations. Taken as a whole, our multiple methods are complementary, and contribute to a fairly comprehensive understanding of the implementation and effects of district policy.

III. Formal Sanctions and Support

Since taking leadership of the district in 1995, the central administration has applied increasing pressure upon students and schools to improve students' academic performance through the creation of formal sanctions. The academic promotion policy requires students in the third, sixth, eighth and ninth grades to score at district benchmarks on standardized tests or risk being retained a grade. The district's probation policy also holds principals and teachers accountable for student achievement as measured by standardized test scores. Schools with less than 15% of their students scoring at national norms are placed on probation. Schools need to increase the percentage of their students scoring at national norms to 20% in order to be removed from probation. Continued low scores place schools under the threat of reconstitution under which principals and teachers can be dismissed.

Probation and Reconstitution

Provisions outlined in the 1995 law gave the district the authority to intervene in low-performing schools. The law enhanced the power of the Board of Trustees and the CEO to identify low-performing schools and place them on remediation, probation or reconstitution. In January 1996, the CEO placed twenty-one schools on remediation. In September of that year, the district took the further step of placing 109 or 20% of the district's schools on academic probation if 15% or less of their students scored at national norms on the ITBS or TAP. The district also considered schools' attendance rates and success at meeting the goals identified in their school improvement plans. To be removed, 20% of a school's students needed to score at national norms.

In June 1997, the district removed one high school from academic probation. In May 1998, the district reported that overall 25 schools were eligible for removal from academic probation. In September, two high schools and 24 elementary schools were taken off probation. The district added three elementary schools to the probation list, but no high schools.

In May 1997, the district reconstituted seven of the probationary high schools. All reported less than 10% of their students scoring at or above national norms and had shown no improvement on test scores while under probation. Under the reconstitution provision, the district had the authority to call for the resignation of all staff at the school, including the principal, teachers and custodians. The district retained two of the previous principals, and replaced five. Principals in reconstituted schools were given the task of rehiring the entire staff.

Instructional Change and Continuity

The primary objective of probation and reconstitution is to improve student achievement in reading and math as measured by standardized test scores. According to district materials, the district provides schools under probation or reconstitution with support services aimed at improving their instructional programs. In light of this goal, we analyzed classroom observations collected in the four case study high schools to ascertain the effects of probation and reconstitution on instruction.

In all of the case study high schools we found that school-level responses to probation and reconstitution place increasing constraints on teachers' instructional decisions. All three schools that faced or currently contend with probation and/or reconstitution mandate that teachers implement several types of activities. Schools vary in the degree to which they coordinate and monitor these efforts. School D has created several coordinator positions charged with developing and overseeing the implementation of school-mandated test practice and test skills development activities. Teachers must submit students' work on these activities to the relevant coordinators. In School B, a Reading Task Force coordinates teachers' use of reading strategies through a monthly calendar that identifies the day of the week teachers in each department must use a specific strategy. Administrators and external partners (discussed further below) have monitored teachers' use of the strategies in their classrooms. School C has initiated school-wide test skills development activities on a more experimen-

TABLE 4

Change in % Students at National Norm on TAP Reading in Probation High Schools

1996 % of Students at National Norm	# of Schools	Average % Change in % Students at National Norm from 1996-1998	# of Schools Improving at/above District Average Rate of Improvement (+3.03)
0 - 5.9	13	+2.20	4
6 - 10.9	22	+2.64	7
11 - 15.0	4	+4.13	2
Total	39		13
% of Total Schools on Probation	100		33

Source: CPS, Department of Research, Assessment and Quality Reviews, June 1998, CPS Academic Accountability Council, June 1998

tal basis. Although the principal has resisted direct classroom monitoring of these activities, teachers are still expected to implement various types of activities such as silent sustained reading and test preparation activities. Even in School A, which has never been on probation, teachers are expected to teach test-taking skills in student advisory periods and within their classrooms as the test date approaches.

In order to assess how teachers respond to these school-level mandates, we analyzed the amount of instructional time teachers devoted to test preparation activities. We classified classroom activities into three categories: *test-taking*, *test skills development*, and *other instruction*. *Test-taking* activities simulate test materials and conditions. Students work individually on materials formatted like the TAP and the IGAP. Teachers do not provide coaching and may or may not time students during these activities.

Test skills development includes two types of activities. The first involves teachers leading students through test-preparation materials. These materials are typically provided to teachers by subject matter department chairs and/or school administrators. Teachers elicit answers from students and discuss why these answers are correct. During these activities, teachers typically provide students with tips on how to take tests, such as eliminating obviously incorrect answers, considering time, etc. The second type are activities specifically aimed at developing skills required on the test but with broader applications. These activities must be mandated at the school level to be classified as test skills development. These include activities like those required by School B that engage students in skimming and/or scanning reading passages, and the daily ten minute grammar and math exercises schools required by School D. These activities are direct school responses to the district's emphasis on improving reading test scores, although they have broader applications and seek to improve reading and math instruction across the school.

Other instruction activities include those under teacher discretion that do not directly relate to test-taking preparation, but, rather, represent what many teachers in our study call the "real" curriculum. Examples of the activities we categorized as other instruction are English teachers leading discussions about short stories, plays or novels assigned as part of the course curriculum, and math teachers reviewing homework from the class textbook. Although they most likely develop skills required on the TAP and IGAP, these activities are aimed more at meeting curriculum objectives than at raising students' test scores per se.

Our analysis of classroom observations in the case study high schools indicates that teachers are accommodating to the district's use of test scores as the criteria for probation and reconstitution. This is particularly true for English teachers. English teachers in the three case study high schools that had been or are currently on probation or reconsti-

TABLE 5

Teacher Allocation of Time 1996-97
(in minutes)

School	Subject	Test Practice	Test Skills Development	Other	Total Minutes Observed
B	English	93	56	451	600
	% of Total	16	9	75	100
	Math	32	0	424	456
	% of Total	7	0	93	100
D	English	40	172	383	595
	% of Total	7	29	64	100
	Math	47	46	405	498
	% of Total	10	9	81	100
Total Minutes Observed		212	274	1,663	2,149
% of Total Minutes Observed		10	13	77	100

tution allocate over one-fifth of their instructional time to test-taking and test skills development activities. In the first year of our case studies, 1996-97, English teachers in School B spent 25% of observed instructional time on test-taking and test skills development, while in School D they spent 36% of observed time on the same types of activities (see Table 5). In 1997-98, English teachers in School B allocated 36% of their instructional time to test-taking and test skills development. English teachers in School D devoted 63% of instructional time to test-related activities. In School C, English teachers spent 22% of the observed time on test-related activities. Math teachers tended to allocate less time to test practice and test skills development activities than did English teachers (See Tables 6 and 7). It should be noted, however, that due to the timing of our observations in School C we did not observe the extensive test-preparation math teachers in that school undertook.

Probation has also affected teachers' allocative decisions in School A. Although School A has never been on probation, in the four weeks preceding the administration of the TAP, both English and math teachers reported that they would begin test practice and test skills development. Since this occurred after our classroom observations, this is not reflected in our analyses. These reports indicate that teachers in School A did allocate instructional time to test-related activities in response to the probation policy even though the school has not been placed on probation.

Our classroom observations suggest that teachers have begun to integrate test skills development activities into the curriculum. In Schools B and D, English teachers increased the amount of time they allocated to test-skills development since the district instituted the probation/reconstitution policy. School B was removed from probation after one year. Yet English teachers in the school allocated more instructional time to test-taking and test skills development after probation than while on probation. In addition, in 1997-98, English teachers in School B adopted textbooks with a reading focus and devoted 15 weeks to the Science Research Associates (SRA) kits. In School B, then, the probation policy has prompted English teachers to refocus the curriculum onto reading and test-taking skills.

Like English teachers in School B, English teachers in School D increased the amount of time they spent on test skills development activities over the two years the probation policy has been in effect. In 1997-98, School D was reconstituted. Under the first year of reconstitution, English

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TABLE 6

English Teacher Allocation of Time 1997-98
(in minutes)

School	Semester	Test Practice	Test Skills Development	Other	Total Minutes Observed
B	First	68	35	841	944
	% of Total	7	4	89	100
	Second	252	313	353	918
	% of Total	27	34	38	100
	Total	320	348	1,194	1,862
	% Total for Year	17	19	64	100
D	First	0	580	209	789
	% of Total	0	74	27	100
	Second	59	477	429	965
	% of Total	6	49	45	100
	Total	59	1,057	638	1,754
	% Total for Year	3	60	36	100
C	Second	19	180	687	886
	% of Total	2	20	78	100
A	Second	0	0	880	880
	% of Total	0	0	100	100
Total Minutes Observed		398	1,585	3,399	5,382
% of Total Minutes Observed		7	29	63	100

teachers devoted a full 60% of observed instructional time to test skills development. This finding suggests that as the district intervention intensifies, teachers allocate more time to test-related activities. While English teachers in the other case study high schools allocated the majority of classroom time to the standard curriculum, English teachers in School D, while under reconstitution, devoted the majority of class time to test-related activities. In effect, test-related activities have begun to displace the standard curriculum in School D, the school under the most severe district pressure.

While our analysis of instructional time indicates that teachers respond to the probation policy's focus on test scores, our case studies also suggest that some conflict within schools has emerged as a result of the policy focus. This conflict manifests itself in several ways. First, given probation's emphasis on reading scores, English teachers appear to feel the most pressure to allocate time to include test-related activities. Interviews with English teachers in Schools B, C, and D reflect their ambivalence about the policy's effect on the English curriculum. Teachers in all three schools referred to the test-taking and test skills development activities as "suspending the curriculum," or as interruptions to the "real curriculum." English teachers in School C express this ambivalence more directly. Although we have seen an increasing in-

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TABLE 7

Math Teacher Allocation of Time 1997-98
(in minutes)

School	Semester	Test Practice	Test Skills Development	Other	Total Minutes Observed
B	First	0	33	639	672
	% of Total	0	5	96	100
	Second	73	168	652	893
	% of Total	8	18	73	100
	Total	73	201	1,291	1,565
	% Total for Year	5	13	82	100
D	First	62	64	387	513
	% of Total	12	12.5	75.5	100
	Second	215	0	801	1,016
	% of Total	21	0	79	100
	Total	277	64	1,188	1,529
	% Total for Year	18	4	78	100
C	Second	0	12	698	710
	% of Total	0	2	98	100
A	Second	0	40	590	630
	% of Total	0	6	94	100
Total Minutes Observed		350	317	3,767	4,434
% of Total Minutes Observed		8	7	85	100

tegration of a reading focus and test skills development into the English curriculum in Schools B and D, teachers in School C were much more likely to express frustration with the idea of teaching discrete reading skills. Most teachers maintained that the English curriculum should focus on literature and that reading should be taught through literature as opposed to workbooks and test-like selections. One English teacher said:

> When we first got on probation it was the English teachers who needed to do something. One thing that became clear to me is that when you're teaching math you teach the test all the time. When you're teaching English you might not teach the test. When you teach English literature you need to teach that. The curriculum is *Hamlet* and *Oedipus Rex*. It's a mature curriculum...

This comment reflects the conflict some English teachers in School C feel with probation's test focus. It also suggests that the probation policy has given rise to some conflict between teachers along subject matter lines. English teachers feel most responsible for reading scores and, thus, for the school's probationary status. Interviews at School C reflect tensions related to this perception.

In sum, schools have responded to probation/reconstitution by mandating that teachers implement various test-preparation and skills development activities. These school-level mandates constrain teachers' use of instructional time. As district pressure on schools increases, school-level

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mandates place increasing constraints on teachers' instructional decisions. Teachers expressed ambivalence about allocating instructional time to test-related activities. In addition, some conflict has emerged amongst teachers along subject matter lines as a result of the emphasis on reading scores.

District Support: External Partners and Probation Managers

While the formal sanctions attached to probation and reconstitution have received considerable attention, the type of support provided to low-performing schools is a critical aspect of these policies. Whether or not schools improve reflects, in part, the effectiveness of district support as well as district sanctions.

The district provides several types of support to the schools on probation and reconstitution. These include external partners, probation managers and operations managers. The external partners and probation managers act as external consultants and are intended to provide the school with the resources it needs to meet its school improvement plan. The operations manager acts as a business manager, overseeing the school's budget and financial concerns. The district plans to have operations managers in all high schools. Because operations managers are not specific to the probation policy, we will consider the nature of the support the district provides in terms of external partners and probation managers.

The district requires each school on probation to work with a probation manager and an external partner. Probation managers are current or former high school principals whose role is to oversee the development and implementation of the school improvement plan and to monitor the school improvement process. The district pays for probation managers. External partners are teams from national reform groups and local universities who are chosen by schools from a board-approved list. In the first year of probation, the district pays for the external partners. The schools are expected to pick up one quarter of the cost each subsequent year of probation. In 1996-97, according to board minutes, the district spent over $4.5 million on external partners. The amount spent in 1997-98 was over $8.5 million. The district spent $325,000 on probation managers in 1996-97, and $335,000 in 1997-98.[5]

In order to assess the impact of district support and sanctions on test scores, we analyzed gains in TAP reading scores made by high schools on probation over the two years since the policy took effect. While the analysis of TAP scores presented above indicates that schools under probation and reconstitution have shown improvements, analysis of gains in reading scores, indicates that these improvements are slight. Table 4 shows the change in the percentage of students scoring at national norms on the TAP reading test in probation high schools. The table indicates that the lowest performing schools on probation have made the smallest gains since the implementation of the probation policy. While, on average, district high schools showed a 3 point gain in the percentage of students scoring at national norms from 1996-97 to 1997-98, the lowest-performing schools averaged about a 2.5 percent change. Only 33% of the schools on probation improved at or above the district average rate of improvement since 1996.

Several questions concerning the nature and effectiveness of district support arise in light of these findings. In particular, what types of services do probation managers and external partners provide principals and teachers? What effects do these services have on instruction?

Our principal survey indicates that the external partners and probation managers provide distinct services to schools. Principals meet much more frequently with external partners than with probation managers. The majority of principals surveyed, 72%, report that they meet with their external partners from one to five times a week. In contrast, less than 30% of the principals surveyed indicate that they meet with their probation managers weekly. Most principals, 61%, meet with their probation managers once or twice a month. The survey also indicates how principals make use of the external partners and probation managers. Principals made use of the external partners pri-

marily for three responsibilities: professional development for teachers (83%), curriculum development (72%), and monitoring teachers (56%). In contrast, principals said that they consulted their probation managers in six areas: professional development (78%), the school improvement plan (72%), the budget (61%), organizational restructuring (56%), testing (56%), and leadership issues (56%).

While there is some overlap in duties, the survey suggests that the external partners bear the most responsibility for driving instructional and curricular improvements. Given their position, we focused on how principals and teachers make use of the external partners and the patterns of conflict and accommodation that arise. Our central concern is how external partners affect teaching in low-performing schools.

Positive View from the Principals

The principal survey indicates that principals felt the external partners were helpful. The principals also indicated that their effectiveness remained quite stable over the two years of probation. In the 1996-97 school year, 13% of the principals reported that the external partners were not helpful, while 67% said that they were helpful or very helpful. By the 1997-98 school year, 69% reported that the external partners were helpful or very helpful; only one principal expressed frustration with the external partner.

Teacher Skepticism

In contrast, teachers in our case study high schools reported little contact with external partners and, in at least two cases, considerable conflict. The majority of teachers in Schools B, C and D who, because of probation and/or reconstitution, have had external partners at their schools for two years, reported that external partners have had no effect on their teaching. In School B, after two years with the same external partner, in 1997-98, only two math teachers and one English teacher said that the external partners provided them classroom assistance. Other teachers said either that the external partner had no effects on their teaching or that they had no interactions with the external partners outside of staff meetings.

In Schools C and D, teachers similarly reported that the external partners have had little effect on teaching; in addition, these teachers reported conflict with the external partners. During the second year of probation in School C, only one English teacher said that the external partners had positive effects on his teaching; no math teachers reported positive effects. Eight English teachers and seven math teachers expressed considerable dissatisfaction with the external partners. One math teacher said that he tried to "never use anything" the external partners presented and one English teacher said that the time consumed by the external partners was harming rather than helping the school.

During the year of probation, teachers in School D reported "miscommunication" between the external partners and teachers. Some teachers refused to allow the partners into their classrooms, and many reported that they were dissatisfied with the quality of the services the external partners provided. The principal expressed similar dissatisfaction and "fired" these partners at the end of the first year of probation. In interviews at School D during the first year of reconstitution, 6 of 8 English teachers and 6 of 7 math teachers said that the school's new external partner had no effect on their teaching. No teacher indicated external partner involvement in their classroom instruction, such as observation or evaluation.

In short, while results from the principal survey indicate that the majority of external partners have considerable interaction with teachers and that principals rate them as being helpful, teachers in our case study either have very little contact with the external partners and/or find them unhelpful. Teachers' frustration with the external partners appears to revolve around two issues. First, teachers reported that they resent what they see as the external partners asserting authority over instructional practices. The fact that the majority of principals reported using external partners to monitor classrooms suggests that teachers may be responding to the evaluative role external partners have been given by principals. In Schools B and D this role led to conflict during the first year of proba-

tion. Teachers in School D refused to let external partners into their classrooms while those in School B balked at the external partners' classroom checklist, saying it was too evaluative and not supportive enough.

The second source of conflict arises from the contradictions between the district's stated objectives for the external partners and the goal of probation/reconstitution. For schools on probation and reconstitution, the central goal is raising test scores. Principals and teachers are held directly accountable for improvements in standardized test scores. In contrast, the district has charged the external partners with whole school improvement. The district's Request for Proposal for funding the external partners states the objectives of the external partners as follows: "to develop programs to assist under-performing schools... to 1) increase student achievement especially in reading and math on standardized tests; 2) improve school leadership, including school organization and fiscal management; 3) establish a student-centered climate; 4) provide effective professional development activities; and 5) promote parent community partnerships."[6] These multiple tasks represent a long-term vision of school improvement that may run counter to the immediate focus on raising test scores.

At the school level, this conflict manifests itself in what teachers see as a lack of focus on the part of external partners. When asked, teachers in School B could not identify the external partner's goals. In School C, the external partners focused their work around their own standards. The "New Standards" promoted by the external partners stand in sharp contrast to the types of skills required of students by the TAP tests. The reading standard entails three components: 1) students will read 25 books over the course of the school year; 2) students will "go deep" into at least one area of interest, and 3) students will read informative material and "produce written and oral work that summarizes information, relates new information to prior knowledge, and extends ideas and makes connections to related topics or information (p. 22)."[7] Fulfilling these standards could involve students employing skills required on the TAP test, such as making generalizations and inferences, identifying cause and effect sequences and main ideas. However, the standards offer teachers few strategies and materials to improve students' reading scores on the TAP. Because teachers must bear the most direct responsibility for improving student achievement, the lack of correspondence between external partners' goals and methods and the demands of the probation/reconstitution policy gives rise to teachers' dissatisfaction with the external partners.

In sum, several factors may explain the discrepancy between the principal's responses to the external partners, as indicated by the principal survey, and teachers' responses. First, the survey suggests that the external partners may take some of the pressure off of the principal for holding teachers accountable. A majority of the principals said that they use the external partners to monitor teachers. Second, because teachers bear the responsibility for improving instruction they come into conflict with the external partners' assertion of authority over instruction. Further, there appears to be a mismatch between the long-term goals the district established for the external partners and the immediate pressures of the probation policy. As the schools place more constraints on teachers' instructional time, as indicated above, teachers feel these pressures keenly. When the external partners provide little support to address the immediate concern of improving test scores, teachers find them unhelpful at best and at worst resent their intrusion.

The Challenge of Enrollment Fluctuation

Probation and reconstitution have had mixed effects on teacher recruitment and student enrollment.[8] One unintended consequence of the district's probation and reconstitution policy may be a reallocation of teachers and students away from low-performing schools. Although enrollment declines often predate probation, the district policy may reinforce an existing trend. These fluctuations may create new challenges for the district and probation/reconstituted schools as the latter

struggle to maintain resource stability.

Our principal survey shows a reallocation in enrollment. We asked principals to indicate if ninth grade enrollment in their schools declined, stayed the same or increased in the 1995-96, 1996-97 and 1997-98 school years. Of the seventeen principals of schools on probation in 1996-97 who responded to the question, 41% of them said that their enrollment declined all three years. The same percentage said that enrollment stayed the same all three years. Only 3 of the 17, or 18%, said that their enrollment increased. In contrast, only 3, or 17%, of principals of non-probationary schools reported enrollment declines during the same time period. Fifty percent of these principals reported enrollment stability, and an additional 33% noted enrollment increases.

Our case study schools fit this pattern: the greater the intervention due to low performance, the greater the challenge of retaining students and faculty. While School A, the non-probation school, reported enrollment and faculty stability, the three case study schools that have been or are currently on probation or reconstitution have experienced enrollment and faculty fluctuations.

Since being taken off of probation, School B has been able to attract both students and teachers to the school. The school hired eight new English teachers for the 1997-98 school year. Four had been student teachers at School B in the spring of 1997. Three were drawn to the school because of its reputation and have experience teaching in the district. The school's enrollment has also increased by one thousand students from September 1997 to September 1998. Administrators attribute this to the school's improved reputation.

School C's enrollment, in contrast, has dropped since being placed on probation. The school's enrollment dropped by 300 students from September 1997 to September 1998. Teachers and administrators attribute this decrease to elementary schools advising their students to enroll in other non-probation high schools and to competition for students amongst high schools in the region. The school anticipates losing teaching positions due to the drop in enrollment.

The Challenge of Faculty Retention and Student Enrollment in School D

School D, the reconstituted school, has experienced faculty and enrollment instability since reconstitution. It has struggled to hire and retain qualified faculty. Under the terms of reconstitution, the principal was given the authority to rehire the entire staff. When the school reopened in August 1997, 40% of the faculty had been replaced. Many among the new faculty were new to teaching. Ten percent of the retained teachers left School D before the 1998-99 school year to take positions in non-sanctioned schools. The principal has reported difficulty recruiting and retaining teachers certified in the subject matter they are assigned to teach. According to the principal, this instability is due to the stigma of reconstitution. He has voiced concern that there are few incentives for teachers to work in the "worst" schools in the system.

Enrollment decline has worsened since reconstitution in School D. According to one school administrator, the school's enrollment decreased by 300 students from September 1996 to September 1997. Enrollment decreased again in September 1998 by 200 students. The principal attributes the over 30% decrease in two years to the stigma of reconstitution as well as the retention of 8th graders due to the district's new promotion policy.

Enrollment decline at School D has contributed to a high concentration of students classified as special education. Due to the district's policy of promoting students with Individual Education Plans (IEPs) regardless of their test scores, this school has received almost double the number of special education students in the 1997-98 freshman class, according to one administrator at the school.

Finally, the enrollment declines are beginning to disrupt faculty positions and budgetary allocations at School D. For example, in late September 1998, the principal reported that he would have to dismiss three social studies teachers. He reports constant negotiation with the district to maintain the same level of resources. Since the school's

budget is determined by enrollment, he anticipates that his budget and the number of staff positions will soon be affected.

School Responses to Enrollment Fluctuations

Our case study schools have adopted various strategies to cope with the competition for students and faculty to which probation may contribute. All of the schools in our case study have, in the last two years, implemented programs intended to attract higher performing students. School A initiated an academic specialty program in the summer of 1997. School A also implemented its own summer school transition program for all incoming 9th graders. Through this summer program, School A added enrichment activities for incoming students. Schools B and C also implemented academic specialty programs. School D is implementing an entirely new organizational structure centered around small schools. The school hopes that the thematically organized small schools will appeal to students and parents. The school has also established connections with two local community colleges so that students can earn college credit while still in high school.

The principal of School B has also used probation and a subsequent increase in student enrollment to reorganize and strengthen the school's English department. Using increased federal funds, in 1997-98, the year after School B was removed from probation, the principal hired eight new English teachers. Many of these new teachers had completed their student teaching in the school, a situation that enabled the principal to assess their effectiveness before hiring them. The principal also appointed a new English department chair who selected textbooks with a reading focus and coordinated curriculum. In 1998-99, the principal lowered English teachers' course load from five to four classes in order to encourage teachers to increase writing instruction. As a result of these changes, English teachers reported a high degree of departmental curricular coordination and collegiality.

These findings suggest that as the public becomes more informed about the schools' test achievements, market-like competition between schools may emerge. The use of test scores to determine a school's probationary status may contribute to various patterns of student enrollment, which include, among others, decreasing enrollment at probation and reconstituted schools and increasing enrollment at non-probationary schools. All of our case study schools have responded to this market-like pressure by implementing specialty programs in order to attract higher-performing students. In addition, the principal in School B used the increase in student enrollment that followed the school's removal from probation to hire more English teachers, an effort which strengthened the school's instructional improvement efforts.

Academic Promotion

In the spring of 1996, the district declared that it would end social promotion and announced a new academic promotion policy. The policy ties student promotion from the third, sixth, eighth, and ninth grades to both course credit and standardized test scores. According to the policy, third, sixth, eighth, and ninth graders could be retained a grade if they failed to score at the district benchmark on nationally-normed tests, the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) or the Test of Achievement and Proficiency (TAP) for ninth graders. The district set the benchmark at approximately one grade level below the national norm. To pass to the next grade, third graders must post a 2.8, sixth graders a 5.3, eighth graders 7.2 and ninth graders 8.0, on both math and reading tests. Students who fail to post adequate scores must attend a Summer Bridge remediation program. In addition, the policy also requires third, sixth and eighth graders to receive passing grades in reading and mathematics and to have no more than twenty unexcused absences. Ninth graders must earn at least five course credits their freshmen year and have no more than twenty unexcused absences.

Summer Bridge Program: An Example of Support and Teacher Discretion

The Summer Bridge Program for low-scoring students is a central component of the district's

promotion policy. The board provides Bridge teachers with "structured" lesson plans that identify lesson objectives and materials, the order of activities, how the teachers should present the material, and the instructional format teachers should use. At the end of the seven-week program, students take the ITBS or TAP again. If they meet or exceed the district benchmark, they are promoted to the next grade. If they fail, they are retained. Eighth graders who are fifteen or over are placed in district transition schools.

In 1995-96, the district focused on eighth grade, the transition year from elementary to high school. Eighth graders were required to score at least 6.8 in math and reading to graduate to high school. In 1996, close to 6,800 eighth graders attended the Summer Bridge Program because they scored below 6.8 in math or reading on the ITBS. The program lasted six-weeks and focused on basic math and reading skills. The district provided teachers with curricular and instructional support from consultants. Of the students who attended the program, 5,950 students took the final exam. Of those students 2,499 or 42%, posted a score of 6.8 or better on the ITBS reading selection and were promoted to ninth grade. In addition, the district granted waivers for 2,066 students who turned fifteen before December 1.[9]

In 1997, the district expanded the Summer Bridge Program to include third, sixth and ninth graders. According to district figures, 40,949 students, or 35% of the district's students in those grades, were required to enroll in the Summer Bridge based on their spring 1997 test scores. Of those, 34,052, or 83%, were tested at the end of the program. The district reports that 14,491 students posted scores at or above the district cut-off score. This represents 43% of the students tested and 35% of the total number of students required to take the program. Due to waivers the district granted students for promotion, 49% of the students who attended the Summer Bridge Program were promoted to the next grade. For ninth graders, of the 14,287 students who should have been in the Summer Bridge Program, 9,610, or 67%, were tested at the end of the program. Of that 3,696, or 38%, met the cut-off score.[10]

In 1998, according to district figures, 27,797 third, sixth and eighth graders should have attended the Program based on test scores. Of that number, 24,619 students, or 89% of the eligible students were tested at the end of the summer. Of the 24,619 students tested, 9,924, or 40%, posted the required scores. In 1998, 11,458 ninth graders should have attended the Summer Bridge. Of those students, 6,698, or 58%, took the TAP test at the end of the summer, with 3,501, or 52%, passing. In total, 31% of the ninth graders who should have attended the Summer Bridge met the promotional requirements by the end of the program.[11]

Multiple Promotion Criteria

In 1997, the district hailed the program as a triumph. Gery Chico, School Reform Board of Trustees President, attributed the program's success to "high standards, high expectations, accountability and a structured curriculum,"[12] and Mayor Daley said that the results showed "that every child can learn, we just need to work with every child."[13]

However, confusion arose and continues surrounding the degree of success of the Summer Bridge Program. It centers on how to distinguish students who were required to attend the Summer Bridge Program for low test scores from those required to attend the program due to excessive absences, and also how to distinguish students promoted because they posted acceptable test scores at the end of the Summer Bridge from those students promoted because they received waivers. In part, this lack of clarity stems from the multiple criteria used to determine whether students meet the academic promotion standards. For ninth graders, six criteria determine whether students are promoted, whether they must attend the Bridge program, and whether they must enroll in developmental reading and/or math courses. For example, a ninth grader who passes all core courses, posts grade level in reading but less than 8.0 in math and has over 20 absences must take the Summer Bridge math remediation program. A ninth grader who fails two core courses and has over twenty absences but who scores at or above 8.0 in math

and reading is required to enroll in summer school to make up one core course unit and to enroll in both math and reading Summer remedial program. That student, however, may receive a waiver from the Summer Bridge Program because he or she scored at grade level on the TAP. Altogether, there are twenty-two different combinations of these conditions with different consequences.[14] The central office aggregates student data in its reports on the Summer Bridge Program and promotion rates, obscuring these distinctions. The effects of the Summer Bridge Program and the Academic Promotion policy could be measured more systematically by considering the different types of promotional criteria.

Teacher Implementation of the Summer Bridge Curriculum: Teacher Discretion and District Directives

In order to examine the implementation of the Summer Bridge Program at the high school level we interviewed five teachers involved in the TAP remediation program at School A, and observed their classrooms for a total of 1,350 minutes in 1997. In 1998, we interviewed and observed eight teachers for two days teaching in Summer Bridge Programs at Schools A and C for a total of 1,440 minutes. Although one should not hastily generalize from our findings given the small size of our sample, our intensive data collection and analysis do provide insight into how teachers cope with the demands and objectives of the Summer Bridge Program and the district's curricular and instructional directives.

A key component of the Summer Bridge Program was the board's "structured" curriculum. The board provided all Summer Bridge teachers with a curriculum guide that included detailed daily lesson plans. The lesson plans identify the lesson objectives, the materials to be used, how teachers should use the materials, instructional formats, and the sequence of activities. Teachers report that district officials stressed adherence to both the content and pace of the curriculum through emphasizing compliance in mandated in-services and monitoring classrooms.

Teachers expressed general satisfaction with the quality of the curricular materials. However, they complained that the pace was unrealistic. Teachers felt that they needed to slow the pace in order to address students' learning needs. According to one central office staff member, the administration was aware of teachers' complaints but maintained that the pace was appropriate:

> Teachers complained about the pace and difficulty of the materials. Many schools were used to using materials not at grade level. The teachers were not accustomed to teaching at grade level. If we don't bring children up to grade level they are never going to improve... It was a shock in year one. Teachers said "These are eighth grade materials!" We said, "We know."

Our analysis of the Summer Bridge Program focuses on how teachers resolve competing demands stemming from what they perceive their students' learning needs to be versus board pressure for curriculum adherence. We compared the types of activities mandated by the board curriculum with the types of activities teachers implemented in their classrooms. In addition, in order to assess how teachers addressed the issue of instructional pace, we analyzed the amount of time teachers spent on each type of activity.

We categorized the types of activities mandated in the board's ninth grade Summer Bridge curriculum[15] and then analyzed classroom observations to ascertain the types of activity teachers complied with, modified or omitted. We considered activities to be modified if teachers maintained the overall lesson objective but used materials different from those assigned in the curriculum and/or used a different instructional format. For example, teachers frequently maintained the lesson objectives for workbook activities but substituted different workbook pages. Teachers may also have maintained objectives and materials but placed students in groups or pairs, thus modifying the activity format.

Even with district pressure for compliance, teachers maintained a high degree of discretion over the choice of activities they taught. It should be noted that teachers did not create their own activities and lessons. Although they modified the

TABLE 8

Summer Bridge Curriculum Analysis:
Percentage of Board Activities Teachers Complied With, Modified or Omitted
Summer 1997 and 1998

Subject	Total Curricular Activities Assigned by Board	Board Activities Teachers Complied With As % of Total	Board Activities Teachers Modified As % of Total	Board Activities Teacher Omitted As % of Total
Math	n=51	25 (n=13)	24 (n=12)	51 (n=26)
Reading	n=85	35 (n=29)	9 (n=8)	56 (n=48)

board curriculum, the materials and activities they taught came from the structured curriculum. Table 8 shows that during the summers of 1997 and 1998, math teachers assigned only 25% of the activities in the district curriculum while reading teachers assigned 35%. Math teachers modified 24% of the assignments and omitted 51%. Reading teachers modified 9% of the assignments and omitted 56%.

Teachers interviewed stressed the belief that Summer Bridge students had particular learning needs that required them to slow the pace of instruction and to focus on basic skills. The high percentage of activities teachers omitted indicate that they did slow the pace of instruction considerably. In order to understand how teachers attempted to address students' learning needs we analyzed classroom observations to examine the amount of time teachers allocated to different types of activities.

We classified the reading activities included in the board curriculum into five categories:

- *Workbook* activities involve the teacher leading the class through pages in the workbook and/or students completing workbook pages alone as seatwork. When students are assigned workbook activities as seatwork, the board curriculum generally calls for teachers to follow up with class discussion.
- *SRA* requires students to work individually on SRA kits. These assignments involve students in reading and answering questions on short reading passages. Students progress through the kits at their own pace.
- *Story* involves students working with longer reading selections, typically from the district-assigned multi-cultural or science fiction readers. These selections are significantly longer than those found in workbooks. Although this work could provide students with more latitude for interpretation, Board activities assigned with the stories typically focused on outlining story structure and short answer questions.
- *Group* work involves students working with one or more of their peers to complete an assignment.
- *Timed Readings* are assignments that simulate test-taking conditions. They are activities from district-assigned workbooks that require students to read and answer multiple-choice questions on test-like passages within a certain time period.

We classified the math activities into six categories:[16]

- *Demonstration/Explanation* involves teachers demonstrating mathematical processes and/or explaining math concepts and their application.
- *Manipulative* involves students using real-life objects to understand math concepts and processes.
- *Drill* refers to worksheet activities that typically involve computation problems although they may also include word problems. Teachers may lead discussions on these activities. Such discussions typically involve teachers asking students for answers,

TABLE 9

Summer Bridge Activity Analysis: Reading
Summer 1997 and 1998

	Type of Activity				
	Workbook	Timed Readings	SRA	Story Discussion	Group
Total No. of Activities Assigned by Board	24 100%	18 100%	16 100%	21 100%	6 100%
No. of Board Activities Teachers Assigned	18 75%	6 33%	1 6%	3 14%	1 17%
No. of Board Activities Teachers Modified	4 17%	2 11%	0 0%	2 9%	0 0%
No. of Board Activities Teachers Omitted	2 8%	10 56%	15 94%	16 76%	5 83%

correcting these answers or showing students how to do the problems. These discussions differ from demonstrations/explanations in that teachers show students how to do individual problems as opposed to providing explanations followed by students applying the explanations to solve problems.

- *Tests* typically involve chapter reviews and/or a series of math problems from the workbooks. Some assignments call for teachers to create their own tests.
- *Calculator* activities require students to use calculators and to learn calculator functions.
- *Group work* involves students working with one or more students to solve assigned problems. These problems can be either computational or conceptual.

Tables 9 and 10 show the percentage of activities within each category that English and math teachers, assigned, modified or omitted. Table 9 indicates that English teachers assigned the majority, 75%, of the workbook activities mandated by the board curriculum. They tended, however, to omit most of the other types of activities. Table 10 shows that math teachers made similar decisions. Math teachers tended to assign and/or modify demonstration/explanation and drill activities from the board curriculum. In short, both math and English teachers chose to implement activi-

TABLE 10

Summer Bridge Activity Analysis: Math
Summer 1997 and 1998

	Type of Activity						
	Drill	Test	Demonstration/ Explanation	Group	Manipulatives	Calculator	Chalkboard
Total No. of Activities Assigned by Board	15 100%	8 100%	9 100%	4 100%	6 100%	3 100%	6 100%
No. of Board Activities Teachers Assigned	4 27%	2 25%	5 56%	0 0%	2 33%	0 0%	0 0%
No. of Board Activities Teachers Modified	7 47%	1 13%	0 0%	1 25%	1 17%	0 0%	2 33%
No. of Board Activities Teachers Omitted	4 27%	5 63%	4 44%	3 75%	3 50%	3 100%	4 67%

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ties that focused on discrete skills and enabled them to lead students through highly defined materials. In contrast, both math and English teachers tended to omit activities that involved individualized or small group instructional formats that may allow students more control over the pace and focus of learning. They also eliminated activities that could require students to grapple with concepts or interpretation. In math, teachers modified or eliminated 100% of the manipulative activities mandated by the board, while English teachers eliminated 76% of the story activities.

Our analysis of teachers' use of instructional time generally confirms the findings of our activity analysis. Table 11 indicates that reading teachers spent the majority of the time, 48%, on workbook activities. Similarly, math teachers spent 46% of their time on drill activities. In addition, math teachers spent 25% of their instructional time on demonstration/explanation. While reading teachers spent 22% of their time on story activities, it should be noted that they still eliminated 76% of these types of activities assigned by the board.

Teachers are presented with several types of constraints that influence their instructional decisions. In interviews, teachers mentioned two constraints in particular, time and student ability as measured by test scores. Teachers coped with these constraints by modifying the board curriculum to focus more narrowly on the program's testing objective and what they perceived to be their students' learning needs. Although teachers' decisions may appear to conflict with central office imperatives to adhere to the board curriculum, they indicate that teachers did, indeed, align their instructional decisions to the program's objective.

Given the high degree of discretion teachers in our study exerted over instructional time, pace, and materials, teacher assignment to the Summer Bridge Program needs to be carefully considered. The selection of teachers for the program has been based on those who volunteer rather than on recruitment of those with appropriate certification and skill. At the two schools we observed, three of the six teachers teaching math were certified math teachers. While various subject areas involve teaching reading, two of the eight reading teachers had certificates in English. The structured curriculum provided by the board is intended to provide a minimum level of competency. The structured curriculum does not, however, negate the highly autonomous nature of teaching. Assigning teachers who may lack the requisite content and pedagogic knowledge needed to teach students with difficulties may undermine remediation efforts.

While teachers report difficulties balancing demands to adhere to district materials versus addressing student learning needs, there appears to be little teacher resistance to the Summer Bridge Program. In contrast, considerable confusion about

TABLE 11

Teacher Time Allocation, Summer Bridge, 1997 and 1998

	Type of Activity	Number of Minutes Allocated to Activity	% of Total Minutes Observed
Math	Drill	494	46
	Demonstration/ Explanation	275	25
	Test	111	10
	Group	80	7
	Manipulative	11	1
	Calculator	0	0
	Management	61	6
	Non-task	48	4
	Total	1,080	99
English	Workbook	824	48
	Story	370	22
	Timed Readings	104	6
	Group	108	6
	SRA	45	3
	Management	64	4
	Non-task	80	5
	Total	1,710	94 %*

* Six percent of observed time was spent on newspaper activities and social discussion in two teachers' classrooms.

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the practical implications of the program for student placement in the case study high schools persists. Administrators in these schools report that it is unclear what low test scores for ninth graders actually mean. Schools place low-scoring students, along with students who do not meet the course credit requirements and/or have excessive absences, in "demote" divisions, or homerooms. Because there are no pre-requisites for any sophomore course but geometry, these students still enroll in sophomore-level courses. In the ninth grade, then, the sanctions associated with the Academic Promotion policy are largely social and symbolic. Students are told that they are in a demote division, but other formal sanctions are not apparent.

IV. Professional Discretion and Restructuring High Schools: Academies and Student Advisories

The district's High School Redesign Plan, first drafted in December 1996, seeks to restructure all aspects of high school operations. High schools must implement the following eight components of the Plan:

1) a core curriculum driven by district standards and assessments;

2) junior and senior academies;

3) student advisories;

4) community service learning requirements for students;

5) support and recovery programs for failing students;

6) expanded academic and career specialty programs;

7) restructured time schedules; and

8) improved professional development for principals and teachers.

Schools have the flexibility to determine the models they will use to implement each of the elements.

Evolution of the High School Redesign Plan

The evolution of the High School Redesign Plan over the course of three years reflects efforts by the central administration to negotiate often-competing demands that arise from various constituencies and demands associated with organizational problems and realities. During the first year of his administration, CEO Paul Vallas initiated the high school restructuring effort in response to concerns about high schools identified by test performance and evaluation studies. For example, one study highlighted high rates of student failure and attrition at the high school level.[17] After meeting with superintendents and principals from successful public, Catholic and private high schools across the state, the central administration created a steering committee and seven task forces to develop a plan in response to this failure. The task forces represent an attempt by the central administration to mobilize support and to build consensus around its agenda. In addition to members of the central office and principals and teachers in the system, the 130 members of the task force include representatives from foundations and businesses as well as school reformers, local school council members, and university representatives. Many of the participants had been part of the previous governance reform and, hence, were highly suspicious of 1995 integrated governance reform.

The first version of the Redesign Plan, drafted and publicly disseminated through a series of hearings held in December 1996, provided schools a high degree of autonomy as advocated by pro-decentralization reformers. Rather than mandates and the creation of formal incentives and sanctions, the draft provided examples of "best practices" and organizational models from which schools could develop their own restructuring plans.

The revised Plan, issued in March 1997,[18] retains the themes of increased "academic press" and "personalization" advocated by pro-decentralization reformers, and presents an action plan for implementing several of the task force's recommendations. Again, schools maintain discretion over the choice of models and the organization of programs associated with the plan. The language of the revised Plan also reflects administration efforts to address other concerns, such as organizational stability and system-wide standards. In this document, the district "requires" schools to implement components of the plan. Although the district gives schools flexibility in terms of the choice of organizational and program models, the flexibility is more limited than previously. For example, while the initial Plan expected schools to design and implement organizational restructuring and identified four possible models, in the revised version schools must adopt a Junior/Senior Academy structure. The revised plan, however, does not delineate formal incentives and sanctions for schools to implement any of the redesign components. Formal accountability mechanisms focus on students rather than on schools and teachers. In particular, students must receive a "Certificate of

Initial Mastery" to move from the Junior to the Senior academy and participation in student advisories becomes a requirement for graduation.

The update of the Redesign Plan,[19] issued by the central administration in April 1998, reflects the administration's comprehensive efforts to transform high schools through uniform academic standards and the creation of more career and academic specialty programs. Unlike the previous documents, this document highlights "school enhancements" and enrollment concerns. The document identifies the increasing number of schools that have or that plan to implement advanced academic programs, such as Advanced Placement (AP) courses, a CPS Scholars program and International Baccalaureate Programs. It also highlights district policies concerned with maintaining neighborhood school boundaries, with curtailing mid-year transfers, and with setting aside 30% of magnet school enrollment openings for neighborhood students. While the "update" document maintains flexibility for local schools in the selection of restructuring models, concerns for advanced academic programs and bolstering neighborhood schools reflect district responses to concerns about the schools' relation to the overall strength of the city. Mayor Daley consistently links school improvement to the health of the city.[20] The "update" on the High School Redesign Plan reflects these concerns. Enhancement programs and new magnet school may attract and retain middle class students.

The evolution of The High School Redesign Plan reflects the administration's efforts to address various constituencies and to develop broad support for what it considers one of its central initiatives. To date, the administration has focused on two components of the Redesign Plan, academies and student advisories. Data from our principal survey and case studies indicate that the implementation of the two initiatives has given rise to very different patterns of conflict and accommodation. Schools have largely accommodated to the Academy initiative while teachers have mounted considerable resistance to the Student Advisories.

The Junior/Senior Academy Initiative

The Junior/Senior Academy initiative provides the organizational framework for changes in the high school curriculum and students' progression through and graduation from high school. Students in the Junior Academy enroll in courses focused on a common core curriculum. Students must earn course credit in the core subject areas and pass the Chicago Academic Standards Exam (CASE) in order to be promoted to the Senior Academy where they can enroll in focused career and academic programs. Students can stay in the Junior Academy until they complete these requirements.

In the 1997 High School Redesign Plan, the Academies fall under initiatives aimed at restructuring "organization and time." It is grouped with initiatives such as four-year career academies and vocational education programs, student information systems reforms, and alternative scheduling. District materials do not specify how schools should structure their academies. Instead, district documents specify the mission and goals of the academies. According to the revised, March 1997 High School Redesign Plan,[21] the mission of the Junior Academy is " to establish a sound foundation in the core curricular subject areas while providing a smaller, more personalized environment (p.8)." The goals of the Junior Academy are stated as follows: "1) reducing the number of course failures; 2) improving attendance patterns, and 3) maintaining support networks for academic and social needs" (p.73). The district relies upon professional discretion at the school level in the design and implementation of the academies in each high school. Unlike probation and academic promotion, there are few formal sanctions attached to the Academies initiative.

Organizational Accommodation

Analysis of our principal survey and case studies indicate that schools have accommodated to the district's Academy initiative to a high degree. A full 98% of the principals surveyed report that their schools had Junior Academies in the 1997-98 school year. In those 40 schools, all ninth graders

are enrolled in the Academy, while 35, or 88%, of the Academies enroll all tenth graders. Survey responses also indicate a high degree of compliance with the stated policy objectives. Eighty percent of the principals surveyed report that a primary focus of the Academy is to improve academics, 56% report that counseling is a central focus, and 54% report that improving attendance is a primary goal.

This pattern of accommodation in enrollment and goals also appears in our case studies. Table 12 describes the organizational model each high school adopted, its objectives and teacher responses to it. The table also reports results from the principal survey. Three of the four high schools had either a Freshman or Junior Academy in 1997-98. Schools A and C have similar organizational models that reflect district goals of providing students with academic and social support. School A initiated a Freshman School in 1996 that served as a model for the district. The Freshman School reflects the principal's "support not sanctions" philosophy. At School A, all incoming ninth graders are members of the Freshman School. The School has a modified grading policy that allows students additional time to complete assignments and maintains a low teacher-student ratio of 1:15 for its advisory program. Teachers work together in interdisciplinary teams that share the same students and meet once a week to discuss student progress and organize interdisciplinary projects. During the 1998-99 school year, the school anticipates moving to a Junior-Senior Academy model, retaining the integrity of the Freshman School within the Intermediate School or Junior Academy.

TABLE 12

Implementation of Academies:
Case Study and Principal Survey Findings

Case Study School	Adoption Year: Freshman Academy	Adoption Year: Junior Academy	Organizational Model	Perceived Impact
A	1995-96; 1996-97; 1997-98	Planned for 1998-99	• Interdisciplinary teaching teams • Students grouped into pods for course placement • Modified grading policy • Enrolls all 9th graders	Improved student discipline and attendance
B	1996-97	Limited model, 1998-99	• Before-school program • Enrolled all 9th graders	None reported by teachers interviewed
C	1996-97	1997-98	• Interdisciplinary teaching pods • Students grouped into pods for course placement • Enrolls all 9th and 10th graders	Improved student attendance and discipline Improved teacher collegiality
D	1996-97; 1997-98	None	• Traditional teacher and student assignment • Enrolls all 9th graders	None reported by teachers
Principal Survey Results	95% report Freshman Academy in 1996-97	98% report Junior Academy in 1997-98	78% report improved attendance 71% report improved testing 63% report improved discipline 51% report improved grades 41% report improved course credit rate	

School C implemented a Freshmen Academy in 1996-97 organized around "pods." Each pod represented an interdisciplinary teaching team that shared a group of students and a common planning period. The pods met once a week to discuss student attendance and progress. Teachers also worked together to develop an interdisciplinary curricula. The school implemented a Junior Academy in 1997-98 that enrolled all ninth and tenth graders and that was structured in the same way as its Freshmen Academy. Academy teachers met in pods over the summer of 1997 to develop interdisciplinary curriculum, although these plans were aborted when the district instituted Programs of Study for the ninth and tenth grades. Teacher teams continue to meet once a week for one class period to discuss students' academic and social progress.

School D has a Freshman Academy that enrolls all ninth graders. One of the two full-time math and one of the two full-time English teachers in the Academy in 1997-98 were elementary certified. The principal hired them believing that their middle-school experience would help lower-performing ninth graders. Unlike those in Schools A and C, teachers in School D's Freshman Academy did not meet regularly. They did not formally coordinate their curriculum. Teachers were expected to provide student support through advisories rather than through a team or pod approach. At a retreat in October 1997, Freshman Academy teachers brainstormed future roles for the school. Teachers suggested common planning time and teams. However, these were not implemented in the 1997-98 school year.

Unlike the other schools, School B does not officially have an Academy. In the 1997-98 school year, a group of teachers initiated a small program for in-coming freshmen focused on an environmental theme. The program represents a school-within-a-school model, and involves six teachers and roughly 140 freshmen. The goals of this program are to integrate curriculum across disciplines and to provide students with more personalized relations with teachers and more enrichment opportunities such as field trips and assemblies. Students move from class to class as groups in an effort to develop supportive relationships. In 1997-98 students with low reading scores constituted the majority of the students in the pod.

Little conflict has arisen in the implementation of the Academies in three of the four case study high schools. Teachers in Schools A and C generally offer positive comments about the team approach fostered by the Academies. In Schools B and D, however, the first year of the Freshman Academy did create some confusion and dissatisfaction. In 1996-97 in School D, the Academy administrators expressed frustration with ambiguous goals. In School B, the Academy was initially scheduled after school but was later shifted to first period; this meant that several teachers had extended days, with some having four or five course preparations. Teachers in School B spoke negatively about the Academy. The lack of a formal academy and the small size of the 1997-98 organizational reform initiative reflects teachers' skepticism towards the reform.

Although the Academy structures differ across the case study schools, in large part they reflect the district goals of improving attendance and providing students with increased academic and social support. Teachers in Schools A and C feel that student attendance and behavior improved because of the pod structure. Teachers in both schools report that the team approach fosters collegial relationships that enable teachers to identify student problems and to intervene more effectively than before. The following comment from a teacher in School A reflects the generally positive view teachers in Schools A and C hold towards the Academy:

> "My team was exceptional... We were really active in student intervention. We were an example of the advantages of personal attention and it was extremely helpful with our students."

The principal survey indicates that principals also attribute improvement in student attendance and discipline to the Academies. Seventy-eight percent of principals reported that they saw an improvement in student attendance since the implementation of the Academy. Seventy-one percent of the principals attributed improvements in testing to the Academy and sixty-three percent reported

improvement in discipline. The survey and our case studies thus suggest that teachers and principals believe that the Academies are achieving the goal of improving attendance patterns and providing students with social support.

In contrast to these high percentages, 51% of the principal respondents believe that student grades have improved because of the Academy while 41% of respondents believe that passing rates have improved. Because no evaluation of the Academies has been done at the school or district level to date, these numbers reflect principals' perception of the Academies effects not solid evidence.

Curriculum Standardization in Core Subject Areas

A central component of the Academy initiative is the district's efforts to standardize curriculum and assessment. The 1995 Reform Act expanded the power of the central administration over curriculum; the district responded by making efforts to standardize curriculum across the system. District curriculum standards, a joint effort of the board, the CTU and various university-based consultants, are aligned with the state goals and provide broad objectives for each subject area. During the 1997-98 school year, the district created and disseminated Programs of Studies aligned with the standards, for ninth and tenth grade core subject area courses. The Programs of Study specify the skills to be developed and the materials to be covered in each course.

The district has begun to develop and implement district-wide final exams, or Chicago Academic Standards Exams (CASE), aligned with the standards. The district piloted the CASE in ninth grade algebra, English and science courses in June 1998. Central office officials reported that 75.8% of the ninth graders passed the English CASE, 42.7% passed the history exams, 35.5% passed the biology test and 25% passed the algebra exam.[22] In order to pass, a student needed to answer at least 50% of the questions correctly. The district plans to implement CASE exams at the tenth, eleventh and twelfth grades by the school year 2001-2002. One central office administrator said the CASE would be factored into student grades and the High School Redesign Plan indicates that the CASE will be one criterion used to determine students' promotion from the Junior to Senior Academies. To date, the central office has not given a definitive answer on how it plans to use the CASE.

At the high school level, the standardization of the curriculum has been accompanied by focusing the 9th and 10th grade curriculum on core subjects. A focus on the core curriculum is an integral part of the district's High School Redesign Plan. The district increased the high school graduation requirements in math from two to three years, and in science from one to three years. The district also eliminated pre-Algebra courses and mandated that low-scoring students enroll in developmental math classes concurrent with their enrollment in Algebra. Students who post low scores in reading enroll in developmental reading courses, further reducing course options. The district also split the physical education requirement into two years of physical education and two years of career education; student participation in ROTC can fulfill both requirements. Finally, the district added two years of foreign language study to the required courses and a community service requirement.[23]

Importance of the Subject Matter Departments in Defining Teaching

While district efforts to standardize curriculum play a crucial role in the implementation of the Academies and of the High School Redesign Plan in general, they represent just one constraint on curricular decisions made by teachers. Actors at different levels of the school organization place pressure upon schools and teachers to align their curriculum with various standards and objectives. Schools and teachers must deal with state goals and assessments as well as subject matter standards promoted by professional associations. These factors compete with the district emphasis on the TAP and the CASE.

In order to assess the influence district initiatives have on teachers' curricular decisions in relation to other influences, we asked teachers how

curriculum was developed for the courses they teach and how they make use of the state assessment, IGAP, the TAP, the CASE and the subject matter department. Table 13 shows the number of teachers by subject matter in each of our case study high schools who report that their curricular decisions are influenced by the state goals, the IGAP, the TAP, their subject matter department and the CPS Standards. Teachers could report that none, one or all of the factors influence their curricular decisions. There could be a total of 16 reports in each category in School A, 45 reports in school B, 25 reports in School C and 37 reports in School D. In total, there could be 123 reports in each category.

Our interviews with teachers indicate that subject matter departments play a key role in the coordination and standardization of the curriculum (see Table 13). Teachers mentioned that they coordinate curriculum with departmental colleagues 68 times. In contrast, they reported that they aligned their curriculum with the CPS Standards 40 times, and that they aligned their curriculum with the state goals 32 times. The department appears to be slightly more influential in English teachers' curricular decisions than in those of math teachers in our case studies. Out of a possible 64 reports, English teachers said that they coordinated curriculum within their department 32 times, while of the 54 possible reports in math, teachers reported departmental coordination 21 times.

Although the department appears to play a key role in curricular standardization for many teachers, there is wide variation across and within schools. A good example of this is School B. During the first year of probation, English teachers in School B reported aligning curriculum with state goals as well as within the department, but in 1997-98, the year following probation, English teachers reported only departmental coordination. The increased importance of the department stems, in large part, from the principal's efforts to strengthen the department as noted above.

The importance of the department in the coordination of the English curriculum in School B contrasts with the apparent lack of coordination in the math department in that same school. In re-

TABLE 13

Curriculum Standardization

Number of Teachers by School and Department who report how curriculum is standardized

Total Teacher Interviews: 123

School	Department	Year	State Goals	IGAP	TAP	Department	CPS Standards
A	English (n=8)	'97-'98	5	0	2	6	7
	Math (n=8)	'97-'98	2	1	2	4	6
B	English (n=12)	'96-'97	4	4	1	7	1
	Math (n=10)	'96-'97	4	2	1	5	0
	English (n=13)	'97-'98	0	1	1	8	0
	Math (n=10)	'97-'98	1	4	4	2	1
C	English (n=14)	'97-'98	1	7	7	3	6
	Math (n=11)	'97-'98	0	9	6	4	6
D	English (n=9)	'96-'97	1	5	2	8	0
	Math (n=12)	'96-'97	4	5	2	6	3
	English (n=8)	'97-'98	5	3	5	7	5
	Math (n=8)	'97-'98	5	3	4	8	5
	Total Reports:		32	44	37	68	40

sponse to a report by a district probation assessment team, the principal pushed for standardization of curriculum within courses and promoted departmental exams; however, math teachers seldom mentioned that they coordinated curriculum within the department. In 1996-97, the first year of probation, 50% of the math teachers reported departmental curricular coordination. After probation, only 20% reported departmental coordination.

The second most reported influence on curricular standardization was the IGAP and the TAP tests. There were 44 reports of IGAP influence and 37 reports of TAP influence. While the tests promoted curricular standardization they did so in rather superficial ways. Teachers reported implementing test preparation activities but referred to these activities as a "suspension" of the regular curriculum or "taking time out" of the curriculum. Thus, while the tests did prompt teachers to coordinate test preparation activities, teachers tended not to consider these efforts as part of developing the "real" curriculum.

The following teacher comments reflect teachers' feelings about the role of the IGAP and TAP in curriculum development and standardization:

> Tests are on top of the curriculum. You still have to teach your curriculum. (Math teacher, School D, 1996-97)

> On Mondays I have to do reading strategies... But when Tuesday comes along I have to go back to my curriculum. (English teacher, School B, 1996-97)

In short, district efforts to standardize curriculum represent just one factor teachers must consider in their curricular decisions. While teachers reported that the district's curricular standards and use of the TAP have resulted in more curricular standardization, the state goals and assessment are equally, if not more, influential. Further, subject matter departments appear to be crucial to curricular standardization. These findings suggest that subject matter departments may play a key role in determining how teachers do or do not implement district curricular initiatives. As we note below, teachers appear to implement district initiatives that reinforce subject matter distinctions rather than those that seek to mitigate them.

Competing Curricular Demands

Our case studies indicate that district efforts to standardize curriculum have given rise to conflict, particularly in relation to the Academy initiative. This conflict emerges at the intersections of district policies. Different district policies place often-competing curricular demands upon schools and teachers. The conflict primarily surfaces amongst English rather than math teachers and arises in the implementation of the district's standards and assessments, the goals of the Academies, and the use of the TAP as the main criterion for placing a school on probation and reconstitution.

As noted above, the district created Programs of Study and CASE exams aligned with the Chicago Academic Standards. The Programs and CASE place pressure upon teachers within subject matters to teach specific materials and objectives. In contrast, one of the goals of the Academies is to encourage curricular integration across subject matters. In our case studies, teachers resolved this conflict by shifting their curriculum to fulfill the requirements of the CASE rather than the Academies. Teachers in School C's junior academy reported that they developed an integrated math/science and English/history curriculum during the summer of 1997. When they returned to school in August of that year, the district informed teachers that they would be required to follow the Programs of Study and that the CASE would be piloted in the spring of 1998. Although teachers said that they did not receive the Programs of Study until later in the school year, they threw out their integrated curriculum to follow the district frameworks. In a school already under pressure from probation, teachers responded to the policy with the clearest form of accountability. The CASE can measure not only student performance but can also, to a limited degree, indicate teacher compliance with the Programs of Study. In contrast, there are no district measures to enforce an integrated curriculum.

Conflict has also arisen because teachers must

simultaneously deal with demands placed upon them by the CASE as well as the threat of probation and possible reconstitution that accompanies the TAP. This conflict was most prominent in School D, which faces the greatest district pressure under reconstitution. Teachers at School D expressed anxiety about the CASE exams in the weeks prior to the test. One English teacher said that once the TAP was over she would start to review elements of poetry for the CASE. Another said in May, "I've already said we've blown that (the CASE), since my students are not going to pass or fail on that, since the school is not being judged, I didn't put emphasis on this." Teachers at School D had focused so much of their instructional time on TAP preparation that they had not completed much of the curriculum that would be assessed by the CASE.

The response of teachers in School D to competing district policies indicates, again, that teachers respond to the policy with the most severe sanctions. The piloted CASE exams had no consequences for either students or schools. Teachers gave priority to the TAP, not the CASE.

Summary

Although the majority of principals identified academics as the primary focus of the Academy, their responses suggest that the Academy has had a greater effect on students' social behavior and test performance than on curricular and instructional practices. Teacher comments in our case study high schools generally confirm this. While teachers in both Schools A and C, the two schools most positive about the Academies, reported that the team approach improved student attendance, many also reported that they seldom collaborated on curriculum. One teacher in School A provided examples of how his team worked to help students but said that interdisciplinary teaching remained at an informal level, with teachers discussing lessons rather than coordinating them. Teachers in School C reported that their efforts to coordinate interdisciplinary lessons were undermined by the board's Programs of Study. With the implementation of the Programs, the teachers coordinated assignments within subject-matters across pods, rather than within pods. The math and English teachers in School B's pod reported that they did not have adequate time to integrate curriculum across subjects. In light of this the teachers followed their department curricula.

In short, though a full 80% of the principals who responded to our survey indicated that academics was the primary focus of the Academy initiative, the effects of the Academies on curriculum and instruction remain unclear. The Academies appear to provide students with a more supportive social environment. These improvements do not appear to have affected classroom teaching and learning. When asked to identify the resources provided by the district for the Academy, 32 of the 41, or 78%, said that the district provided funds, while only 18 of 41, or 44%, said that the district provided curricular support. Our case studies suggest that principals used funds to provide teachers with support personnel and to provide teachers with common planning times. While several factors contribute to the lack of curriculum coordination and integration reported by teachers, the lack of district curricular support may also have contributed to this problem.

Significantly, survey results indicate that only 5 of 41, or 12%, of the principals report receiving support from the district for evaluation of the Academy initiative. While teachers and principals believe that the Academies have improved student attendance and discipline, no formal evaluation at the school or district level has been conducted and no evidence adduced. Given the centrality of the Academy initiative to the High School Redesign Plan and the unclear effects of the initiative on curriculum and instruction, a formal, district-wide evaluation of the program and assistance to schools should be considered.

Student Advisories

In 1997-98, the district initiated the Student Advisory Program as part of its high school restructuring plan. The district expected schools to implement an advisory period in students' schedules. In

a summary of the goals, a CPS document states, "Small groups foster a sense of family, collaboration, connection and caring among students and staff."[24] The initiative called for each student to be assigned a teacher/advisor who would play a supportive role by acting as a liaison between parents and the school, keeping track of advisees' progress, and guiding students during the school year. The CPS also expected teachers to implement a curriculum of study skills, life skills, and career education. To facilitate the curriculum, the district distributed two books of recommended activities. These included activities centered on career and vocational goals, academic goals, and social goals and concerns. While the program was mandated for freshmen and sophomores, schools were free to implement it school-wide.

Teacher Resistance

In contrast to the Academy initiative, the advisory program met with considerable teacher resistance. Conflict arose between the board and the CTU over teacher compensation in the spring of 1997, when the board first introduced the program. The union viewed the advisory as an additional preparation but the board refused to provide extra compensation. The conflict remained unresolved throughout the 1997-98 school year. This resulted in tensions between teachers and principals at the school level. One central office staff member said about the implementation of the program:

> Teachers said it's an extra function we don't get paid for and we're not doing it... Another problem has been the CTU contract. If a school wants a variation from the contracted fifty-minute periods they have to have 50% plus one vote to get a waiver. Even when it's no more than fifteen or twenty minutes, the principals still have to get the vote. Many principals lost the vote about advisories. In deference to grieving, at two or three schools the faculty members groaned and they don't have advisories... We'd like to have had the advisory implemented this year and next year but the system didn't provide the support for the principals to get this done.

This conflict manifested itself most visibly in School B. At the end of the 1996-97 school year, staff meetings at School B centered on teachers' fear that the student advisories would be an added preparation with no additional pay. School B's principal proposed schedule changes that would reduce the length of class periods by five minutes, allowing for student advisories as well as electives to be scheduled into the regular school day. Teachers rejected such proposals, focusing their complaints directly on the advisories. School B's principal noted that he was placed in the middle of the conflict.

The unresolved conflict between the CTU and the board concerning advisories resulted in varying commitment to the program at the school level. While School D allotted twenty-five minutes each day for division (or homeroom) and advisories at all grade levels, School C held advisories one day a week only for ninth and tenth graders, and School B held advisories during long divisions scheduled at the end of each quarter marking period in 1997-98. Teachers in School C and B reported that the marginalization of the advisories indicated by the scheduling left the program fragmented.

In addition to conflict over compensation, in Schools, B, C, and D, teacher interviews suggest that teachers feel uncomfortable with the expansion of their role inherent in the advisory goals. One teacher in School B felt that the board curriculum touched on subjects that teachers were not trained to handle and posed risks to students. Most teachers reported that they seldom used the board curriculum. When they did, many said that they merely distributed the materials and discussed them briefly. Teachers preferred to develop informal relationships with their students and most often report that they used the advisory as a study hall, providing students academic tutoring and test-preparation activities. This suggests that teachers in the three schools rejected the counseling aspects of the program and limited the policy objectives to providing informal social and academic support for students.

Teachers in Schools B, C, and D also reported frustration with the lack of incentives and sanctions for students associated with the program. Teachers across the three schools reported that students did not receive credit for attending the advisories and that there were no penalties for absences.

As one teacher in School C said about the lack of student commitment, "No carrot. No stick." The lack of formal guidelines for students places an even greater emphasis on teachers' commitment to the program, something that our case studies suggest varies considerably and tends to be low.

School A's advisory program differs from the program in Schools B, C, and D in that it is more school-based. In 1997-98, the school devoted forty-five minute class periods four days a week and a ten minute class period one day a week to advisories. Rather than relying on the board curriculum, the school delineated the types of activities for each day. These activities included reading, math, personal development and journal writing. Teachers were expected to hand in weekly lesson plans with their intended activities.

Teachers in School A were generally positive about the advisories, although their commitment to the program varied. "Each teacher has five classes and an advisory," said one teacher, "and she has the responsibility of attempting to guide and support students in his or her advisory." This teacher said that the model worked well only for some teachers. She also noted that some students responded to it and some did not. Another teacher thought the advisories had the potential to be very helpful to students, but added, "It's just hard to get the students to settle down because they're not receiving a credit. Sometimes it's noisy. Sometimes it's baby-sitting. Because they [students] are not getting credit they are not doing the work." While teachers at School A did not express the same level of conflict or frustration over advisories as Schools B, C, and D, they did discuss concerns about implementation. Advisories at School A were consistent with the school's overall philosophy of providing support for students. The school provided guidelines as well as devoted time in the schedule for success. Perhaps this mediated teacher frustration.

At School A, the principal complained that he lacked the authority over teachers who elected not to participate in the school's advisory lesson plans. Teachers at School A had voted for advisories as an extension of division. The principal reported that he had no recourse with a teacher who chose to turn his or her advisory into a study hall. So, while School A appeared to have the model that most approximated the vision set by the Office of High School Reorganization, administrators remained constrained by unresolved conflicts between the CTU and the board.

The implementation of the student advisory program has given rise to conflict across organizational levels which has in turn resulted in a low level of school and teacher commitment to the program and superficial accommodation. The central office has responded to teacher resistance to the program in two ways. First, in 1998-99, the board will pay teachers to hold advisories once a week for thirty minutes, over the course of twenty weeks. Second, the central office has placed more emphasis upon academics and downplayed the counseling aspect of the program. The new curriculum will focus more on such topics as study skills, how to organize time, and career concerns.

Summary

The implementation of the Academies and the Student Advisories has given rise to different patterns of conflict and accommodation. Our principal survey and case studies suggest that little conflict has arisen in association with the Academies. An overwhelming majority of the schools have implemented some form of a Junior Academy and the majority of principals attribute improvements in student behavior and attendance to the Academies. In addition, principals reported receiving support from the central office for the Academies. Our case studies suggest, however, that the Academies' impact on instructional processes remains unclear. Further, efforts to standardize and focus the curriculum on the core subjects are in conflict with the Academy goal of integrating curriculum across subject matters. Teachers must negotiate these competing goals, and our evidence suggests that they do so in ways that reinforce subject matter distinctions.

In contrast, the implementation of the Student Advisory program has been severely limited due

to conflict surrounding issues of teacher pay and the expansion of teachers' role. While some schools have restructured their schedules to develop advisories, some have implemented only a few advisory periods throughout the year, or none at all. These decisions reflect teacher resistance to the program. Further, student advisories rely much more heavily upon teachers' voluntary commitment to formalize personal relationships with their students than do the Academy initiatives. Teachers in our study do not appear willing to make this commitment.

V. Conclusions

Summary of Findings

Integrated governance has enabled Chicago's district leadership to focus on system-wide efforts to improve student and school performance. The administration's educational accountability agenda attempts to improve performance outcomes by establishing and enforcing system-wide standards. The four initiatives we studied, academic promotion, probation/reconstitution, academies and student advisories, illustrate the different approaches employed by the district. The initiatives entail different mixtures of formal sanctions, support, and professional discretion. Our findings suggest that diverse patterns of accommodation and conflict have arisen as schools and teachers respond to the various types of leverage. These patterns of accommodation and conflict exert different effects on teaching within the schools and classrooms we studied.

Schools and teachers accommodate to policies that entail clear formal sanctions on performance outcomes.

a) The high schools all mandated that teachers implement test-related activities.

b) Even in the school that was never under probation/reconstitution, teachers implemented test preparation activities in the weeks prior to the state assessment and TAP.

c) Classroom observations indicate that English teachers in schools either currently or having once been placed on probation or reconstitution allocate 16% to 60% of instructional time to these activities at various times during the school year.

d) Teachers in schools under reconstitution allocate a higher percentage of instructional time to test-related practices.

e) English teachers in at least two of our schools have begun to incorporate a reading focus into the curriculum as a result of probation/reconstitution.

Probation/reconstitution does not seem to reduce teacher discretion over broader curricular and instructional practices.

a) School and teacher responses to the formal sanctions associated with test scores have not, by and large, displaced the standard curriculum; this finding tempers the praise and criticism offered by proponents and opponents of the probation/reconstitution policy alike.

b) While schools and teachers have reallocated instructional time to include test preparation, it is unclear whether or not probation/reconstitution has resulted in a significant reevaluation of the effectiveness of current curricular and instructional practices.

Policies that allow for a relatively high degree of professional discretion have resulted in mixed patterns of implementation at the school and teacher levels. The academies and student advisories provide contrasting examples.

On Academies:

a) The principal survey indicates that an overwhelming majority of schools have instituted Freshman and/or Junior Academies. Principals believe that the Academies have improved student attendance and discipline.

b) Teachers in two of the high schools believe that the academies have improved teacher collegiality, student discipline and student attendance.

c) In the other schools teachers remain more skeptical. Teachers in these schools desire more time for common planning, suggesting that teachers may endorse the broader goals of the Academy initiative as reflected in district funds for common planning time for teachers in instructional pods.

On Student Advisories:

a) Considerable resistance and conflict have emerged surrounding student advisories. Failure to resolve the union/board dispute concerning teacher compensation combined with teacher resistance to an expansion of their role has contributed to limited implementation.

b) Schools vary considerably in how often they

schedule advisories and how they institute the board's advisory curriculum.

c) Teachers reported that they implement the assigned curriculum only superficially and feel more comfortable using advisories as academic support periods rather than as counseling periods. In response, the board has revised the advisory curriculum to emphasize academic and career issues rather than social and personal needs.

The mismatch between formal sanctions and district support results in teacher skepticism.

a) Considerable conflict has emerged around the external partners provided to low-performing schools on probation and reconstitution by the district.

b) Teachers reported that the external partners had minimal or negative effects on school improvement efforts and on teaching practices.

c) Teachers tended to resent what they perceived as a challenge to their instructional authority and felt that the external partners provided little help in improving test scores.

d) Teachers' negative responses may stem, in part, from the inconsistency between the district's use of test scores as the primary criterion for probationary status and the long-term, multi-focused charge the district has given external partners.

Formal sanctions may contribute to changing patterns of student enrollment and teacher recruitment.

a) Although teacher recruitment and enrollment patterns reflect multiple, complex forces both within and outside of district and school control, our study suggests that the probation policy may contribute to a movement of students and teachers away from low-performing schools.

b) Case study schools have implemented speciality programs to attract higher-performing students.

District policies place competing curricular demands upon schools and teachers. In response, teachers align curriculum and instruction with policies that involve formal sanctions.

a) The district's academy initiative, CASE policy and probation policy entail different, and conflicting curricular demands.

b) Teachers gave priority to probation's focus on the TAP and CASE preparation over integrating curriculum within the academies.

Teacher discretion circumscribes district instructional interventions.

a) Teachers exerted considerable discretion over the types of activities they implemented and the allocation of instructional time in the Summer Bridge program.

b) Teachers' curricular and instructional decisions reflect their accommodation to the formal sanctions on student performance tied to the academic promotion policy.

Policy Implications

The district has launched numerous initiatives in its efforts to improve teaching and learning in high schools. Our study indicates that these initiatives have had some impact on how schools and teachers allocate instructional resources. While district efforts may have begun to show some progress in student performance, the district must confront several key challenges in order to encourage and maintain more sustained, long-term improvement.

Balancing Sanctions, Support and Professional Discretion

The district's educational agenda revolves around the use of formal sanctions, support and professional discretion. A key challenge for the district is to strike a balance between these different policies in order to support sustained improvement in the high schools. This is most crucial in schools that remain on probation and under reconstitution. These schools, on the whole, are making only slight improvements as measured by standardized test scores, even with the support of external partners and probation managers. In addition, the stigma attached to schools under probation and reconstitution may impede efforts at faculty and student recruitment that could provide the

necessary resources for long-term school improvement.

It is crucial then for the district to consider closely issues concerning both formal sanctions and support. Currently the district measures school performance with the ITBS and TAP. Standardized test scores provide a very limited indication of school performance. In light of these limitations, the district should consider using multiple indicators that could encourage broader school and instructional improvements. These indicators should be aligned with other district efforts to improve school performance, such as its high school redesign plan.

First, the district can maintain its current support system but sharpen the tasks it assigns external partners. The district needs to align the goals it sets for the partners with the central objective of probation/reconstitution, namely the immediate improvement of test scores. With a mission focused specifically on improving reading and math instruction, external partners can provide targeted support to schools. The partners and schools can then work on more long-term processes after this initial targeted phase.

Second, the district can reorganize its support system and rebuild the district's own capacity for providing schools with technical support. In this regard, the advisory system developed by the Birmingham Local Education Authority, Chicago's sister district, can serve as a model. The Birmingham Advisory and Support Service (BASS) is staffed with 30 "teacher advisers" who provide teachers with training in classroom practices and with another 35 "link advisers" who assist schools in dealing with issues that affect the entire school organization. BASS staff assesses each school on the improvement it has made in terms of gains in scores on the national exam. The advisers target their assistance to the schools based on these assessments. School staff are integrally involved in establishing the improvement plans.

Third, using local universities to create a teacher recruitment/induction program may result in more long term, district-wide instructional improvements. School B's principal in our case study established strong connections with teacher education programs and used student teaching practica as a means to recruit and assess new teachers. The district can work more closely with not only teacher education programs but also with arts and science programs within universities to establish these ties in more high schools and to develop an induction period that might enhance the effectiveness of its current recruitment and monitoring programs.

Supporting Instructional Improvements

The policies we studied in this report involve different mechanisms with which the district hopes to intervene in and improve instruction. Our findings indicate that district efforts to direct and foster instructional improvements are greatly circumscribed by the high degree of discretion inherent in the teaching task. If the district intends to support instructional improvement two issues merit particular attention.

First, though the district has created several mechanisms by which to evaluate teachers, the current organization of instruction makes evaluation difficult and limits its use as a tool to improve instruction. Given the enduring organizational reality of "loose coupling," the district needs to consider ways of supporting evaluations and professional development that draw upon both the strengths of school faculty and district efforts to establish curricular standards. At issue is the quality of professional development the district can provide and the incentives it can create to support teachers in sustaining, evaluating and developing effective instructional practices.

Second, as noted above, the district needs to consider the quality of the curricular and instructional standards it establishes and how the formal sanctions, support and discretion it applies to schools and teachers support and/or limit the potential of these standards to serve as levers for instructional improvement. We found that district policies place competing curricular and instructional demands on schools and teachers. For example, while the district's curricular standards and

assessments establish long-term instructional objectives, the formal sanctions tied to probation and reconstitution have encouraged teachers to devote more instructional time and resources towards test practice and test skills development activities. While it appears plausible that increasing the proportion of time devoted to these activities will increase test scores, that may not, in fact, be the case, or it may be so to a limited degree. Low test scores may be the result of a lack of substantive knowledge as much as of weak skills. Learning to take tests does not necessarily compensate for the knowledge component. Certain test-taking practices have been known to raise test scores in the short run, but there may be long-term negative costs if reading comprehension and mastery of concepts or of mathematical reasoning receives secondary consideration. In short, the emphasis on test taking may not be a viable process for improving school and student performance. The district needs to consider how its policies may work at cross-purposes to undermine meaningful instructional improvements.

Coordinating Supply and Demand

Finally, current district policies appear to be contributing to a movement of faculty and students away from probationary schools. This redistribution will drain resources needed for improvement away from these schools and may result in overcrowding in other schools, thus undermining improvement efforts in general. The district needs to examine both how its own policies contribute to this redistribution and how demographic changes within the city affect enrollment patterns. It is the responsibility of the district to coordinate supply and demand; no other level of school organization is equipped to address these issues. In this regard, the district needs to consider how it will deal with schools that are undersubscribed and oversubscribed for a sustained period of time. The central concern for the district is to ensure that students in both types of schools receive adequate resources and opportunities. The district has launched an ambitious school building plan. These efforts should be aligned to address the effects of district policy and demographics alike.

Our intention in this report was two-fold. First, we examined how high schools have implemented key components of the district's educational accountability agenda. Second, we assessed how this implementation affected classroom teaching. Because our focus was on the implementation of the district agenda as it exists and operates at the district, school and classroom levels, we did not question the reform efforts in substantive terms. One implication of taking these reforms for granted is to leave an impression that the successes and failures of these efforts can be attributed mainly or solely to their implementation rather than to the nature of the reforms themselves or to a combination of both. It is important, therefore, to indicate that our approach did not enable us to consider these larger issues. We have investigated, in other words, a segment of a considerably larger set of questions.

Our report suggests that several issues need further consideration. First, if the district intends for its accountability agenda to foster instructional improvements, both the quality of the standards it establishes and how they affect teachers' curricular and instructional decisions need to be assessed. Though district standards are typically viewed as a "top-down" policy aimed at directing instruction, curricular standards are highly influenced by current teaching practices. At issue is what practices do the district's curricular standards and assessments reinforce, foster, and sustain, and how do these practices affect student learning? Addressing these questions is crucial to assessing the effects of the district's educational accountability agenda on teaching and learning.

Second, linkages between the elementary and high schools remain crucial to improvements in both. Strategies designed to reform high schools target problems generated, in large part, by the poor performance of students leaving the elementary schools, as indicated by how far below national performance standards ninth graders are when they enter high school and acknowledged by the fact that the district sets pass levels at a year below those standards. To date, the district has addressed

this issue primarily through its academic promotion policy. This policy attempts to ensure that high schools receive students prepared for high school-level work. As we found, however, it is difficult to assess how effective this policy has been in that regard. District curricular standards and assessments play a role in this, as well, as they outline the curriculum students should receive as they progress through the system. These efforts may hold potential. Yet, the demographic and enrollment shifts that we noted cannot be addressed through these means. The extent to which the district can coordinate issues of supply and demands of students and of teachers merits further investigation.

NOTES

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14. Chicago Public Schools. *Guidelines for Promotion in the Chicago Public Schools, 1997-1998*

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